SECRET WARS II: THE INSIDE SCOOP

COMICS FEATURE™

NMP

48432
MAY
$2.95
$3.50
CANADA
UK L2.95 DGS

MUTANTS IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

Ron Goulart Reveals What the Future Holds for

X-MEN

NEW MUTANTS
ALPHA FLIGHT
DEFENDERS
DAZZLER

Goulart on GOLDEN AGE COMICS

Collins on DICK TRACY

Perrin on SUPERHERO GAMES

Schuster on ANIMATION

0 71896 48432 05

SF MOVIE LAND

Formerly Enterprise Incidents

Get the News First - Direct From Hollywood

Blasting off from Hollywood, SF MOVIELAND, the only science fiction movie magazine produced in the home of film and television, takes you to exciting new worlds every month. With in-depth coverage, full-color special reports, exclusive interviews and revealing profiles of the actors, directors, writers and effects experts who make the magic happen, SF MOVIELAND brings the universes of imagination to your door at a special 25% discount off the cover price.

9 issues for $19.95

Yes! Send me 9 issues of **SF Movieland**. I've included my $19.95 payment with my order.

NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____
STATE_____
ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY

NMP
NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

SF MOVIELAND
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

COMICS FEATURE

COLUMNS

Animated Antics
Hal Schuster provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of Saturday morning animation production. Direct from Hollywood!
7

Heroes
James Van Hise spotlights the Darknight Detective with an in-depth study of Batman's thematic and artistic development, from his origin in 1939 to his most current '80s adventures.
19

Games
Steve Perrin offers helpful hints for those of you interested in role-playing DC and Marvel superhero games, plus reviews of the latest games featuring characters from the smaller comics publishers and from England.
21

Golden Age
More fascinating odds and ends from the early '40s as Ron Goulart reviews some magazines that failed to cash in on the four-color gold rush.
36

Strip Search
Max Allan Collins begins his fond remembrances of his early years writing the Dick Tracy newspaper strip and working with artist Rick Fletcher.
47

Silver Age
This time around it's the early Marvel superteams, the Avengers, X-Men and Fantastic Four.
62

FEATURES

MUTANTS IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE
Ron Goulart, our resident Golden Age expert, unearths the secrets, past and future, of some of Marvel Comics most popular Silver Age characters in this fascinating study of **The X-Men, Dazzler, Alpha Flight, The New Mutants** and many others.
11

A FESTIVAL OF CARTOON ART
A roundtable discussion by syndicators, editors and cartoonists, including **Steve Canyon's** Milton Caniff and **Beetle Bailey's** Mort Walker, transcribed from the Festival of Cartoon Art conducted last autumn on the campus of Ohio State University.
9

MY PAL SUPERMAN
Once again, master satirists Jacobs and Jones take a cockeyed look at the Superman legend. In this installment, Supe's new pal Will Jones finds the Man of Steel's old buddy, Jimmy White, less than enthused about making his acquaintance.
42

DEPARTMENTS

News
4

Listings
46

Cover characters and titles © 1985 Marvel Comics Group.

STAFF

Hal Schuster
Editor/Publisher

Robert Lewis
Prod. Mgr./Art Director

James Van Hise
John Peel
Ron Goulart
Contributing Editors

Robert Strauss
Asst. Publisher

James R. Martin
Asst. Art Director

Elizabeth Castro
S.A. Leander
Production Assistants

Jack Schuster
President

For advertising information:
Jack Schuster (818) 766-8625

Comics Feature is published bi-monthly by New Media Publishing, Inc., 3630 Mound View Ave., Studio City, California 91604. *Comics Feature* is a trademark of New Media Publishing, Inc. This issue number 35, May-June 1985, content is copyright 1985 by New Media Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprint or reproduction in part or in whole without written permission is strictly forbidden. *Comics Feature* accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, art or other materials, but if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope, they will be seriously considered and, if necessary, returned. Products advertised are not necessarily endorsed by *Comics Feature* and any views expressed in editorial copy are not necessarily those of *Comics Feature*. Subscription rates $29.95 for twelve (12) issues in the United States and Canada, $34.95 foreign, in U.S. funds only. Printed in U.S.A.

FEATURE NEWS

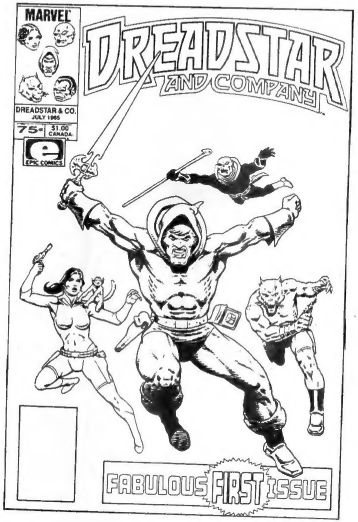
A quiet revolution is taking place in comic books. It will change the life of your favorite artist and/or writer for many years to come. The largest comic book company in America has gradually, in slow stages, with strong prodding, begun a new era in the rights of comic book creators.

Traditionally Marvel Comics has retained all rights in the material published and characters featured in the comics they publish. So did everyone else. The publisher published—absorbing the risks, paying artists and writers hit or miss. Creators created, collected their paychecks and signed over all rights.

About ten years ago things began to change. A market for original comic book art sprang up. Artists gained the right to ownership of their work—a right they very well may have always had but never bothered to exercise. Several thefts and fires later, new procedures for returning artwork were implemented. An additional pair of changes quickly followed.

The specialty market for comic books came to life. An avenue for reaching a segment of dedicated comic book fans while bypassing traditional distribution channels came into being. Following a couple of near-monopoly distributors and some homicidal competition things temporarily settled into a system of regional wholesalers. Small publishers—and later, special programs of the larger publishers—launched new product just for this market. Artists and writers bargained for and gained ownership rights to their brainchildren. But profile of the characters was as small as the actual circulation and that was very low.

Simultaneously an additional change occured. Secondary sales, media rights, product licensing and similar non-publishing revenues surpassed the income generated from actually publishing. But only for high-visibility, household names and images. Writers and artists need widespread distribution of their



creations—narrowly-targeted markets simply do not generate saleable properties.

Artists and writers were offered a choice—they could own their characters and receive little exposure or give away their creations and gain widespread recognition. Catch 22. If your character was to become popular enough to net you financial gain it was no longer your character. Now, Marvel has entered a new option into the game. Some people will be fortunate enough to be able to eat their cake and have it too.

Epic Comics was created by Marvel to compete with the newer publishers. It produced titles for specialty sales only, aimed at small circulation and allowed the creators to keep their rights. Mass market circulation is the new wrinkle. Select properties will be published which will be circulated in the same manner as their normal comic books. Writers and artists—the creators—get to keep their copyrights **and** get high-profile, large-scale distribution.

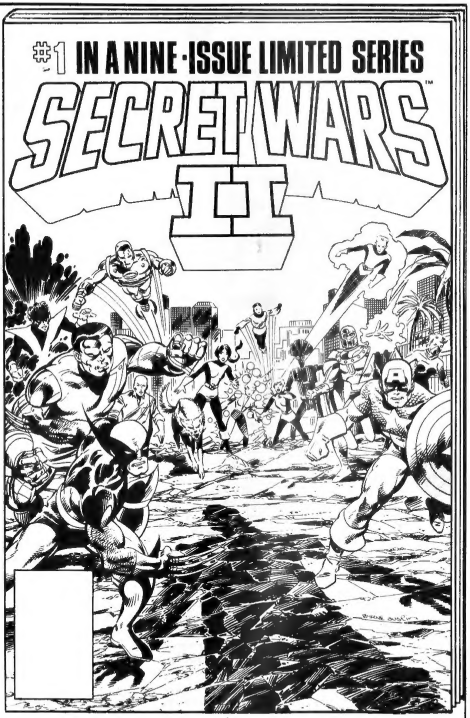
The first three are **Groo** (Sergio Aragones and Mark Evanier), **Dreadstar & Co.** (Starlin—on sale in March) and **Elfquest** (reprinting the Pinis' series—April shipping). It's a whole new game and Marvel has thrown out the first ball without fanfare.

SECRET WARS II

The big news from Marvel is the son of **Secret Wars**. The original series became the best-seller of the year and now the new nine-issue limited series, beginning in April, should also become the dream book of every Marvelite. On-again virtually every major villain and hero is involved in the festivities. Only this time it takes place right on Earth and immediately ties in to lots of regular titles.

The creative team is head-honcho Jim Shooter as writer, veteran Sal Buscema on pencils (a number of fans were unhappy with the artwork on the original series, perhaps leading Marvel to change horses) and inker Steve Leialoha. Shooter is obviously well-acquainted with the denizens of the Marvel Universe and Buscema has drawn them all. **Secret Wars II** will pick up right after the finale of the original series with the Beyonder deciding that observing human experiences isn't enough—he must participate in them himself. According to **Marvel Age**, "This time, it's not happening on a distant planet—this time it's going on right in the thick of the Marvel Universe. Each and every issue of **Secret Wars II** will tie in with at least three other Marvel titles the month it comes out—making the series much larger than its nine issues would seem. For example, number one, on sale in April, will tie in to **New Mutants 30, Captain America 318, X-Men 196,** an **Iron Man 197!**"

Bob Budiansky will tie the entire works together in a story that will involve the entire Marvel Universe.



Secret Wars 1 ties in with
New Mutants 30
Captain America 308
X-Men 196
Iron Man 197

Secret Wars 2 ties in with
Web of Spiderman 6
Amazing Spiderman 268
Fantastic Four 282

Secret Wars 3 ties in with
Daredevil 223
Incredible Hulk 312
Avengers 260

Secret Wars 4 ties in with
Dazzler 40
Alpha Flight 28
Rom: Spaceknight 72

Avengers 261

Secret Wars 5 ties in with
Thing 30
Doctor Strange 74
Fantastic Four 285

Secret Wars 6 ties in with
Power Man 121
Cloak & Dagger
Power Pack
Micronauts
Thor 363

Secret Wars 7 ties in with
New Mutants 36
Amazing Spider-Man 273
X-Men 202
Defenders 152
Spectacular Spider-Man 111
Moon Knight 8

Secret Wars 8 ties in with
New Mutants 37
Amazing Spider-Man 274
X-Men 203
Defenders 153
Avengers 265
Fantastic Four 288

OUTSIDERS TO JOIN LEGION, TITANS

Beginning in June 1985, **Batman and the Outsiders** will join **The Legion of Super-Heroes** and **The New Teen Titans** in the DC Comics "hardcover/softcover" publishing plan. **The Outsiders** will be published as a better quality Baxter Book (the hardcover version), be numbered as a first issue and only be available in comic book shops. **Batman and the Outsiders** will continue to be published as a regular book, continue the existing numbering and be available both on newsstands and in comic shops. In June of 1986, **Batman and the Outsiders** will begin reprinting issues of **The Outsiders** published the previous year.

Batman and the Outsiders writer and editor Mike Barr announced that "Alan Davis has taken over the drawing of **Batman and the Outsiders** starting with 22 to allow regular artist Jim Aparo to begin working on the hardcover/softcover issues. Alan is a very talented artist, and I'm really pleased he was able to take on the book."

Davis stated that he's a "big admirer of Jim Aparo's work" and that he's excited about drawing **Batman and the Outsiders.**

"To avoid the kinds of scheduling problems often caused by publishing two issues of a book each month for one year (until the reprints begin in **Batman and the Outsiders** in 1986), DC will have several issues "in the drawer" before we begin publishing **The Outsiders,"** says Vice-President/Executive Editor Dick Giordano. "That's why Jim Aparo is taking a leave of absence from the current book—to get those issues drawn. And this gives us the opportunity to work with the unique talents of British artist Alan Davis. We're all excited about his work!"

Alan Davis previously worked on the Marvelman strip in the British comic book magazine, **Warrior.**

MARVEL HANDBOOK TO HOWARD

The Official Handbook of the Conan Universe is the very presumptuous title to Marvel's somewhat sequel to their popular **Handbook to the Marvel Universe.** Alan Zelenetz, the scripter of the project says, "I was in the right place at the right time when this opportunity to do the Conan handbook arose. Basically, we want to introduce the Marvel readers to what exactly the Conan universe is and why it is different from the Marvel Universe. This is not a scholarly volume, nor is it intended to be the definitive reference work. It is an accurate, fairly detailed volume written in a quick, lively style."

Artists whose work appears in the 32-page comic book include Mary Wilshire, Ernie Chan, Armando Gil, Gary Kwapisz, Rudy Nebres, Bob Camp, Andy Kubert and Vincent Waller. Notably absent are John Buscema, Frank Thorne and Gil Kane.

Zelenetz continues, "The thing that gives **The Official Handbook of the Conan Universe** its major practical value is that there will be a cross-reference index. This index literally quintuples the amount of information available. For example, even though there is no particular entry for the Red Brotherhood, a pirate band, by checking the index you'll discover information about them through the cross-entries about the Zingaran Freebooters and Barachian pirates."

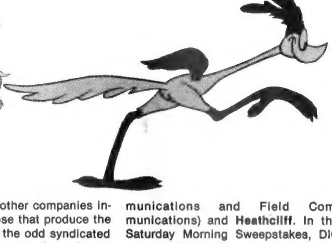
Besides covering Robert E. Howard, Conan, Kull, Belit, Red Sonja and Valeria, the book is also divided into several topics. These are Arms and Armor, Sorcerers, Demons, Gods and Worship. Also included will be detailed maps of both the Hyborean World and Atlantis and the Pre-Cataclysmic World.

According to **Marvel Age** "About the only thing missing is a list of all the writers and artists and the titles of all the different Conan and King Kull adventures." This reporter finds difficulty in accepting coverage of the many works of Howard, and the additions made by various other writers including L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Carter and Bjorn Nyborg, in a 32-page comic book as in any way complete or even accurate. It is feared that such a condensation will not preserve the original and new readers will be confused. It is doubly odd that the very thing that Marvel would be best at, detailing the adventures which occured in their own publications, is what they have chosen to neglect.

BY HAL SCHUSTER

Animated Antics

SATURDAY MORNING



So far this column has covered many of the greatest animation characters of the past. We have offered the memories and views of a couple of the truely great animators. And we have even sat in as creators griped about the problems which they face. But, while all of that is valuable and certainly has an important place in this magazine, it does not tell us what is happening now, which companies are producing what classics in-the-making, if any, and what we can expect to see in the movies and on our television screens. Now we will begin to rectify that.

This issue we will offer an overview of what is currently happening at the various studios. Next issue we will begin to spotlight each studio individually, giving a clear view of what is being done by whom and, hopefully, offer some of the impressions of the men who do the work. Some of the information for this column was gathered from industry trade publications, the very excellent special animation issue of **The Hollywood Reporter** in particular.

The real stars of the animation field are DIC, Filmation, Hanna-Barbera (whose offices I passed on my way to dinner last night as they are mere blocks from our offices), Marvel(the first studio we featured in-depth, even before beginning this series) and Ruby-Spears. There are other companies involved as well, those that produce the random special or the odd syndicated series. But these are the primary players and it is these studios, in addition to Disney Studios, perhaps the greatest animation studio ever created and now the proud parent of an entire cable network as well as such upcoming feature films as **The Black Cauldron.** There are other companies, those that either were major producers in the past or simply purchased major libraries from other companies, and they own the rights to a number of major characters. Warner Bros. airs **The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Show,** MCA has **Woody Woodpecker** and MGM/UA retains **Ruff 'n' Ready.** And there are many others.

To begin our overview we will start with perhaps the largest producer of animated fare, DIC. Andy Heyward heads the U.S. branch of this international conglomerate. His division, launched in 1982, joins other DIC Audiovisuel of Paris divisions, including local branches throughout much of the world. The parent company is in turn a property of the even larger Radio Television Luxembourg.

DIC creates animated series for both Saturday morning television and syndication, where they offer **Inspector Gadget** (along with LBS Communications and Field Communications) and **Heathcliff.** In the Saturday Morning Sweepstakes, DIC was the first foreign company to successfuly invade the market, with **The Littles.** The company has also aired **Wolfrock TV**(produced with Dick Clark Co.), **The Get Along Gang, Pole Position** and **Kidd Video**(along with Saban Prods.). In specials, DIC has offered **Rainbow Brite** and **Poochie,** and is now producing episodes of **Robotman** (along with United Media Prods.). DIC is a neighbor of **COMICS FEATURE** with studios in Studio City. The firm employs 300 people and is planning a theme park and a restaurant chain based on its characters.

Group W Productions owns Filmation, a company which played a major role in the animation field, then seemed to virtually disappear, and has now returned in a very major way. Due to the efforts of this company there is now a market for early fringe series, first-run syndication. The big winner that led the way was **Masters of the Universe featuring He-Man** which began its run in September 1983. Ratings for this series have always been fantastic and a spin-off, **She-Ra: Princess of Power** is planned as literaly, a sister series. That will begin airing in September 1985. This season Filmation also offers **The Adventures of Fat Albert,** a creation of

Visuals accompanying this column are © 1985 by their respective copyright holders.

Bill Cosby. Lou Scheimer, the company president, leads a crew of 400 to 500 at headquarters in Reseda. Filmation's first efforts, aside from commercials and documentaries, included **Superman**(1965), and later **The Archies, The Brady Kids, Gilligan's Planet** and **Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle.** Filmation has also been involved in features and holiday specials.

Hanna-Barbera Productions even looks impressive when it is closed at night. This is the one I drove past on the way to dinner. Founded by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, this company is known to virtually everyone, even those who have no interest in animation at all. Theme parks devoted to the company's characters are located throughout the country and such varied products as vitamins and candy have borne its images. Hanna-Barbera has produced live-action series, specials, telefeatures and theatricals in addition to tons of animation. This Taft Entertainment subsidiary has a library of over 250 series. Current efforts include **The Smurfs** and **Scooby-Doo.** Characters have included The Flintstones, Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Hound, Quick-Draw McGraw, Top Cat, Johnny Quest, Scooby Doo, The Jetsons and an endless list of others. Most of the company's shows are still alive in syndicated reruns and more than 500 million people throughout the world (in over 80 countries) watch the madcap adventures of H-B's animated heroes. The company occupies more than 2½ acres and employs over 800. According to the **Hollywood Reporter,** "Hanna-Barbera is still the place to beat."

Marvel Productions was covered in-depth just two issues ago. Marvel Comics is known to all of our readers as the largest comic book company in the country, and when the animation studio was set up in 1980 it had quite a head start. The animation studio has already produced and co-produced 15 network and syndicated animated series and specials and more than 100 commercials. **Spiderman** was the first offering from the company and has been followed by **Pandamonium, Meatballs and Spaghetti,** and the current hit, **Dungeons and Dragons,** based on the popular game from TSR. Now the firm is airing **Jim Henson's Muppet Babies** and a series based on **GI Joe: A Real American Hero.**

The company is run by Margaret Loesch (formerly executive vp of programming for Hanna-Barbera) and Stan Lee (who certainly needs no introduction). Loesch's creative philosophy? She told **The Hollywood Reporter** that "Children want the same things out of television as adults. They want to be entertained, they want to be swept, to laugh, to cry, to be involved with and share adventures with the characters they are seeing." (And if you do check out the January issue of **COMICS FEATURE,** you will find that this very articulate lady told us a whole lot more!)

Ruby-Spears Entertainment is also owned by Taft Entertainment, much like that other partnership of Hanna and Barbera. This team is formed of Joe Ruby and Ken Spears and began operations in 1977. Since that time there have been 21 television series and 21 television specials, including the popular **Alvin and the Chipmunks** (with Bagdasarian Prods.), **Mr. T** and the **Saturday Supercade,** as well as **Plasticman, Thundarr the Barbarian** and **Puppy's Greatest Adventures.** Thundarr is a sword-and-sorcery character created by some of comicdom's finest talents. We covered this excellent animated series in greater depth in previous issues of **COMICS FEATURE** and it is well worth checking-out. The company is also heavily involved in syndication as well as Saturday morning fare. There is now a major corporate effort to enter the live-action field. Programs have included **The Cabbage Patch Kids First Christmas, Turbo Teen** and **Dragon's Lair.**

And, as mentioned earlier, there are others. These will not be featured in upcoming columns but it is worth taking a quick look at their efforts. You never know when one of them will hit the big time in animation! Do note that some of them have certainly already been quite successful in their own areas, including King Features, Scholastic and Disney. But here we are concerned, for the moment, with television animation.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

A FESTIVAL OF

CARTOON ART

cartoonists on campus

Milton Caniff and Mort Walker join editors and syndicators for a roundtable discussion of newspaper strips.

BY ED BLACK

A sunny fall day on the wide campus of Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, always dawns crisp, sometimes frosty, but heats up by mid-afternoon. Talk is usually of Earl Bruce, the head football coach, and his Buckeyes; of whether the power of fullback Keith Byars or the prowess of signal caller Mike Tomczak will spiral the Bucs to the Rose Bowl this year.

But this particular fall weekend, talk of the graphic prowess of Milton Caniff intermingles with that about Tomczak; the contemporary humor of Cathy Guisewite is discussed along with the great pass reception in last week's game. The Buckeyes are playing away this weekend and the cartoonists have come to town.

For two days, political and syndicated cartoonists held seminars, signed autographs, drew their famous characters and discussed the particulars of their unique profession. There were also displays of original comic art, both on and off campus, from the past and the present.

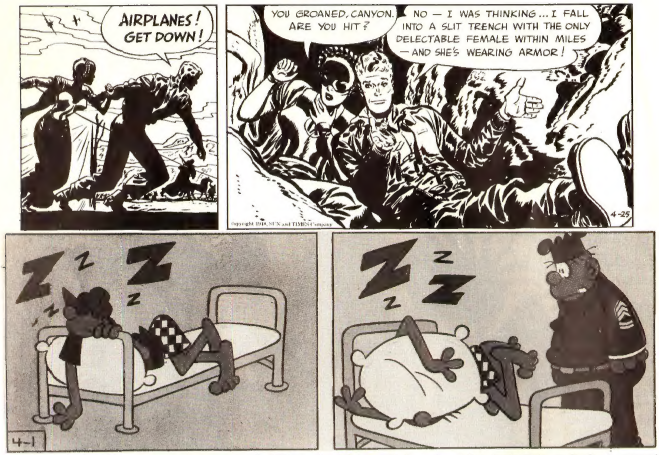
THE FESTIVAL OF CARTOON ART

The Festival of Cartoon Art was the idea of the curator of the Milton Caniff Research Library, Lucy Shelton Caswell. The library, part of the School of Journalism, was begun when OSU alumnus Caniff (Class of 1930) donated over 50 years of artwork to the school. Caniff, by the way, draws **Steve Canyon** and before that drew **Terry and The Pirates** and **Dickie Dare**. Before syndicaton, he was a staff artist on newspapers in Dayton and Columbus, Ohio and Miami, Florida.

The Caniff Library is expanding to include original artwork by other Ohio natives who made it big in the graphic art world.

The panels for the Festival of Cartoon Art met in the auditorium of the Student Union. A moderator guided

Beetle Bailey and *Sarge* © 1985 Mort Walker. *Steve Canyon* © 1985 Milton Caniff.



each panel and fielded questions from the audience. The keynote address was delivered by Bil Keane, creator of **The Family Circus**.

The panel set up to discuss comic strips included: Tom Batiuk, who draws **Funky Winkerbean**; Cathy Guisewite of **Cathy**; Irwin Hasen, **Dondi**; Fred Laswell, **Barney Google & Snuffy Smith**; Art Sansom, **The Born Loser**; and Alan Gowans, Professor of Art History, University of Victoria, British Columbia, who gave a lecture on **Popeye** at the Franklin County Library. Gowers is the author of the book **Prophetic Allegory: Popeye and the American Dream**.

The panel of political cartoonists was equally impressive. Many of the most influential editorial cartoonists in the nation were present. And these are men who gently with soft humor or savagely with biting satire can change the course of history. The panel boasted Tony Auth of the Philadelphia Inquirer; Draper Hill, Detroit News; Etta Hulme, Fort Worth Star-Telegraph; Kate Selley Palmer, late of the Greenville, South Carolina News, now of the Florence, South Carolina Morning News; and Jules Feiffer.

The panel on syndication was comprised of Milton Caniff, Mort Walker of **Beetle Bailey**; Luke Feck, editor of the Columbus Dispatch; Toni Mendez, cartoonists' licensing agent; Mike Peters, editorial cartoonist of the Dayton, Ohio Daily News and creator of the new comic strip, **Mother Goose and Grimm**; and Bill Yates, comic art director of the largest distribution syndicate, King Features. A stellar group indeed.

THE SYNDICATE

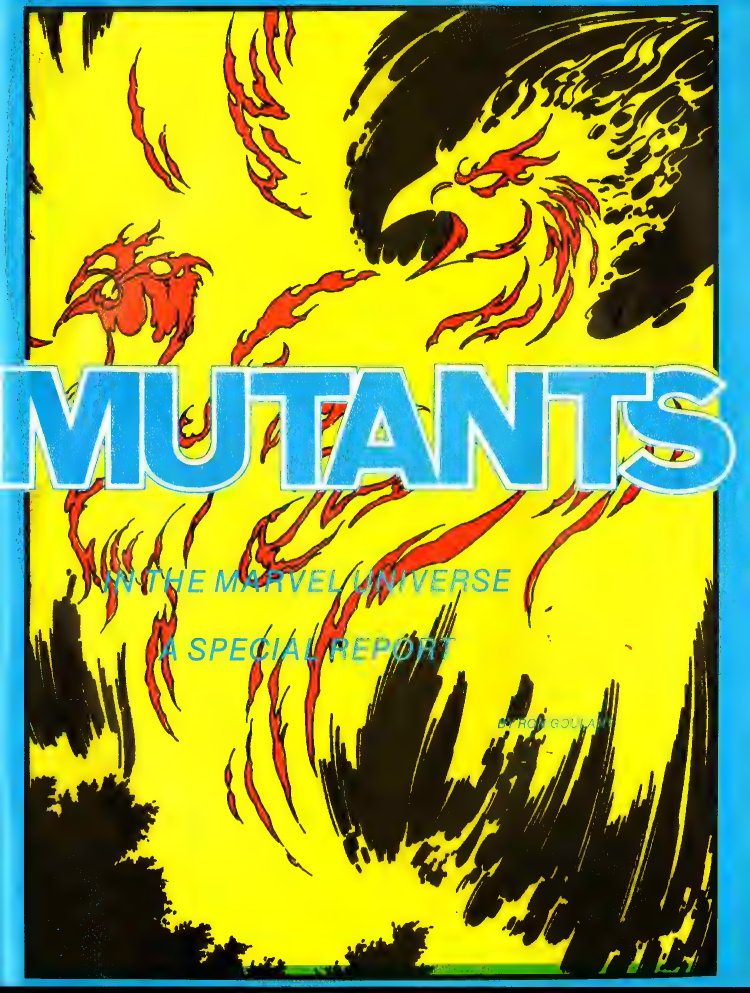
The enlightening session on syndication featured information about a world in which livelihoods depend on how many papers carry a strip, panel or editorial cartoon. Panelists included the artists whose lives were at stake; the editor who buys the strips and who is constantly bombarded with new material when the syndicate salesmen come calling; and the syndicate art director who looks over the thousands of submissions each year to select which one or two have the potential to join the highly competitive marketplace for syndicated comics.

The panel was moderated by Henry Schulte of the staff of the OSU School of Journalism. He has worked as editor on several newspapers, among them the Chicago Daily News at the time Mike Peters worked there as a bullpen artist. Schulte's preliminary remarks were an insight into how he, as editor, selected strips.

Schulte: For a number of years I had been involved in buying and killing off—that's a dirty word—cartoons, panels and otherwise. Let me say a few words on how killing and buying cartoons was done in the old days...methods were very primitive but, I thought, useful. I was careful not to take a potential strip out to my newsroom and ask a bunch of reporters what they thought. What I thought was the smart thing to do was (to take) the cartoons home and show them to my children, aged 8½, 9½ and 11. I remember taking one of Mort Walker's home. It was called **Hi and Lois**. I got a unanimous opinion from the kids: thumbs down. So I never bought **Hi and Lois**, but Mort tells me this is the 31st year. So you see, editors and ex-editors make lots of mistakes. We'll start with someone who buys a lot of comic strips and cartoons: Luke Feck, editor of the Columbus Dispatch, with a few words of advice and wisdom.

Feck: In preparation for this I (wrote) a column inviting our readers to evaluate the comics that we carry and vote (on their favorites). Beside the 2,100

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23


MUTANTS
IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE
A SPECIAL REPORT
BY ROY GOULART

All *X-Men*, *Alpha Flight*, *Defenders*, *Dazzler* and the characters appearing within these books are trademark and or copyright © 1985 Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence. All visuals within this article © 1985 Marvel Comics Group.

The X-Men, Alpha Flight, Dazzler, the New Mutants — What dire fates await Marvel's Homo Superiors in an increasingly hostile world? Our Ron Goulart finds out.

My own involvement with the fate of every single mutant—good, bad and otherwise—in the Marvel Universe began with an unexpected phone call. The fateful call came from three thousand miles away and offered me the assignment of preparing a report on what the Marvel mutants—X-Men, the Defenders, Dazzler, the New Mutants, Alpha Flight, et all—were going to be up to in the forthcoming year. I accepted the job, after some demuring and deliberation, little realizing what lay ahead. Before it was all over I would have an enigmatic meeting with mutant-artist Bill Sienkiewicz in a shadowy art supply store in fashionable Westport, Connecticut, I would make lengthy long distance calls to key Marvel editors and writers and, more importantly, I would end up knowing more about the Marvel mutants than I ever had before. I'd know what they'd all been up to of late as well as what lay in store for many of them, what new gangs of mutant heroes and heroines are waiting in the wings, what author and artist changes are in the works. And I'd know something about what's going to happen in the already eagerly awaited 200th issue of **X-Men**.

The main reason for the aforementioned demuring was simple. While I am a certified comics buff—see **COMICS: THE GOLDEN AGE, also published by New Media Publishing, Inc.**, and others for proof—I am also something of a mouldy fig. That is, I tend to be more interested in what Sub-Mariner was doing in 1942 than in what Iceman has up his chill sleeve this month. I was told, though, that my fresh unsullied viewpoint, coupled with the fact that I was also a science fiction writer, made me ideal for the sort of objective overview of the mutant situation at Marvel in 1985 that was wanted. So, feeling like someone who's been told to brush up on Tibetan Buddhism because he's going to have to interview the High Lama in ten minutes, I agreed to accept the assignment. What follows is an account of what I did and all, or almost all, that I learned.

JUST WHAT ARE MUTANTS?

Even though I've been writing about mutants and mutations for years—in SF novels such as **Heilquad** and **Big Bang** and in the **Star Hawks** comic strip Gil Kane and I did back in the late 1970s— I decided to do a little boning up on basics before plunging into the investigation.

The Golden Science Guide to Zoology told me—"Mutations are changes in the genes which produce new characteristics in the offspring. Such offspring are called mutants and sports . . . . Survival value of mutations is usually limited. Laboratory research indicates that many mutations are harmful to the species, making the mutant less likely to survive and produce offspring than its fellows." Among the examples of successful mutants were shortlegged Ancon sheep and polled Hereford cattle. Interesting, but not exactly the stuff of which exciting adventures are spun.

I got closer to the mark by zeroing in on the science fiction field, which is the seedbed from which most of the Marvel mutants have sprung. I consulted Brian Ash's **The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction** and, after a pause to read again the book's reference to me, flipped to Section 02.15: Mutants and Symbiotes. It turns out, as it often does when researching SF firsts, that H.G. Wells had pioneered in this area as well and done just about the earliest writing about mutated man. Ash cites a 1931 pulp story by Edmond Hamilton, **The Man**

Mutants Galore! As if their own books weren't enough, Iceman, The Angel and The Beast left the X-Men to join the Defenders.

Who Evolved, as "the definitive story of the type" dealing with the effects of radiation as the agency for mutation in life forms. Significant novels are Olaf Stapledon's **Odd John** in 1935 and A.E. Van van Vogt's **Slan,** which first appeared as a serial in **Astounding** in 1940. Vogt is called "the first author seriously to explore the sociological complications arising from a mutant race attempting to survive among normal humanity." The slans, with their ability to read minds, are hunted by normal society and their adventures seem to have had considerable influence on what was to happen at Marvel some decades later. So does Henry Kuttner's **Mutant,** a collection of his "Baldy" novelettes, published in book form in 1953 under his Lewis Padgett penname. Needless to say, the number of mutant books and stories increased after the dawn of the Atomic Age in 1945.

Next I brushed up on some of the history of the Marvel brand of mutant. **The World Encyclopedia of Comics** reminded me that it had all begun with **X-Men** 1 (September, 1963), a joint creation of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. "The story introduced a band of teen-aged mutants, each gifted with a particular superpower, brought together by Professor X. The wheelchair-confined Professor X, gifted with amazing mental powers, brought them together at his private school to guard against schemes of evil mutants, notably their archfoe Magneto. The X-Men consisted of Cyclops, whose eye emitted a powerful blasting beam; The Angel, born with operative wings; Iceman, a reverse Human Torch, able to hurl snow and ice bombs; The Beast, an ape-like being whose erudite speech was in marked contrast to his bestial appearance; and Marvel Girl, able to levitate objects and command a force-field." From other

sources I learned that **X-Men** 94 marked the advent of the new Xs—Colossus, Nightcrawler, Thunderbird, Wolverine, Storm and Banshee signing on and The Angel, Marvel Girl and Iceman resigning. Thereafter followed a complexity of comings, goings, deaths and transmutations.

MORE MARVEL MUTANTS

The Defenders first surfaced in **Marvel Feature** 1 (December, 1971) and achieved their own title in August of 1972. This group of Defenders was completely different, later changing to include The Angel and The Beast. The Alpha Flight gang appeared initially in **X-Men** 120 (April, 1979) and graduated to a magazine of their own in 1983. The New Mutants, relative late comers on the sport scene, didn't show up until 1982, in the fourth Marvel Graphic Novel, and moved into a comic book of their own early in 1983. Dazzler, one of the relatively few mutant superheroines on roller skates, debuted in **X-Men** 130 and got a magazine of her own in 1981.

To be certain I had all my facts straight I also delved into the **Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe**. There, once these old eyes adjusted to the teenie weenie type, I picked up much useful information, especially about the chap who started it all. Professor Xavier was born in New York City, is six feet tall, weighs 190 and has blue eyes. "Charles Xavier is the mutant son of nuclear researcher Brian Xavier and his wife Sharon. Even as a pre-adolescent, Xavier could use his powers to sense other people's intentions and emotions. Upon reaching puberty, Xavier's telepathic powers began to fully emerge. As a side effect, he began losing his hair until high school graduation he was completely bald." Here, obviously, was yet another Baldy. Professor X also "possesses

numerous psionic powers, making him the world's most powerful telepath." Among his knacks are the ability to read minds and project his own thoughts, within a radius of 250 miles. He can make others think he's invisible, can sense the presence of another mutant "within a small but as yet undetermined radius," can project his astral body and can control matter psychokinetically. For good measure he is "a genius in genetics and various other sciences." I wondered, fleetingly, if Professor Xavier were related to Doctor Xavier, the semi-mad scientist portrayed by Lionel Atwill in Warner's 1932 **Dr. X.**

CATCHING UP ON MUTANTS

Admitedly, I've been a bit slipshod these past few years in keeping up with all the doings of the Marvel gang of mutants. Before approaching the folks at Marvel, therefore, I did some cramming. Borrowing the titles I needed from the vast library of my fourteen-year-old son, I commenced studying. After dipping into a few of the very latest issues of **X-Men, New Mutants,** etc., I felt as though I were trying to familiarize myself with the plots and characters of a halfdozen television soap operas at once. Careful reading, though, note-taking and considerable rereading brought me to the point where I felt I had a grasp, albeit tenuous, on the interlocking situations.

Nimrod—described by Chris Claremont as "our hunter from the future...the ultimate Sentinel in human form"—has just arrived to seek out mutants and "obliterate them." Professor Xavier has been mugged by an anti-mutie gang and anti-mutant sentiment seems to be on the rise—"Filthy mutie vermin...They ought'a be stamped out once and for all!" Meanwhile, over in the New Mutants' reality Professor Xavier hasn't been mugged yet (or possibly he already has and has recovered, I'm not clear on this point) but is feeling low because he's been reunited with Moira MacTaggart but fears he's going to lose her again and "feels as if someone has torn out his heart." In New Defenders territory Senator Robert Kelly is still at work trying to make "mutants second-class citizens" and Moondragon is bothered by a "small shadowy voice that whispers within her–that she is dying!" Dazzler meantime, no longer on skates, pursues her singing career yet feels that "if it's not mutant-haters, there's someone out

there who wants to get me! Why can't things be easier for me?"

I now felt ready to start. By chance, while visiting nearby Westport to load up on supplies, I ran into Bill Sienkiewicz. He was wearing a dark trenchcoat and buying art supplies. Figuring he was just the man to explicate some of the points about the New Mutants I was still a bit shaky about, I started off by asking him how things were on the mutant front.

"You'll have to ask Ann Nocenti or Chris," Bill replied. "I'm quitting the book, moving on to something else."

Disappointed, I took my leave as soon as I, politely, could.

ARCHIE GOODWIN AND DAZZLER

The first person I contacted within Marvel offices down on Park Avenue South in Manhattan was Archie Goodwin. I've known him, casually, for years, having written a couple of pieces for **Epic**. And, when I was relieved of my command on **Star Hawks**, Archie took over. I'd heard he was taking over Dazzler and asked him about that.

"I thought I'd try it for a little while," he told me. "I needed some work and no one else wanted to do it, I think."

When I queried him about how Dazzler fit into the overall mutant picture, he said, "It's become an important part of the Marvel continuity. Our most popular group, the X-Men, are mutant characters. And there's this whole ongoing thing where anti-mutant sentiments have swept through most of the world. For the last year-and-a-half or so they've been dealing with this increasing hostility. Somewhere in '85 that'll all come to a head. I'm more or less on the edges of it."

What about Dazzler herself?

"Up till now the X-Men have sort of stayed secret about who they were....Dazzler, in the graphic novel that Jim Shooter wrote, revealed to the world that, clearly once and for all, she was a mutant....Which has had bad repercussions. Part of the stuff I'm doing is an outgrowth of that. It's now hard for her to get work, she has to travel around more and more and so on."

I mentioned that writers have similar problems and Archie responded, "Yes, it's something I can really get behind and identify with."

Is his Dazzler going to be any different than what's gone before?

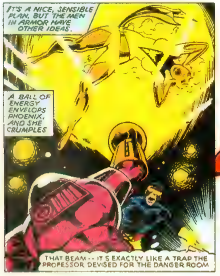
Archie Goodwin is going to handle the writing chores on *Dazzler*.

"In Dazzler we're trying to make a definite change, in that up to now she's been a little more on the soap opera side. I'm going to try to re-emphasize a little more of the action and heroics."

Any ideas on why mutants seem to be so popular at the moment?

"The important thing isn't that they're mutants, but that they're good characters. That's what makes **X-Men** successful."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 51



HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE

It was the dawn of the age of comic books. Superheroes were in their youth and so were their creators. New ideas fed new ideas, and at D.C., where Superman had filled a void most people hadn't even realized existed, another hero was in the offing. While totally different from the Man of Steel, the Caped Crusader would become inextricably linked to Superman as the years passed, moreso than any other characters the company would originate.

In 1939, artist Bob Kane was barely into his 20s when he created The Batman. He'd begun professional cartooning in 1938, working for the famous Eisner/Iger shop producing "Spark Stevens" for **Wonder Comics**, "Peter Pupp" for **Jumbo Comics**, "Side Streets of New York" and "Van Bragger" for **Circus Comics** and humor strips for D.C. such as "Jest A Second," "Gingersnap," "Gumshoe" and "Professor Doolittle."

With the success of Superman, D.C. wanted to forge ahead with as many costumed adventurer strips as they could come up with. Editor Whitney Ellsworth approached Kane with such an assignment.

Kane's collaborator at the time was writer Bill Finger. Kane had worked with him on the adventure strip "Rusty and his Pals" for **Adventure Comics** and on a strip about a big-game hunter, "Clip Carson", for **Action Comics**.

Kane phoned Finger and described his idea for a character called Batman. Finger visited Kane and looked at his drawings, which depicted a figure who resembled Superman. The costume featured tights, boots and a small domino mask. There were no gloves or gauntlets, and instead of a cape there were two stiff projections that looked like batwings. With Finger suggesting alterations, the mask became a cowl with long ears to make the costume more bat-like. Finger wanted the character to look more mysterious, like The Shadow or The Phantom. A cape replaced the wings and gloves were added.

As the writer, Finger envisioned The Batman as being a combination of The Shadow, Doc Savage, Douglas Fairbanks and Sherlock Holmes. Kane was heavily influenced by such newspaper strips as "Flash Gordon" and "Dick Tract' and the earlier sequences showed a marked influence from Milton Caniff's "Terry and the Pirates" and Chester Gould's "Tracy." The Gould influence was especially pronounced in the rendering of underworld characters.

The first strip, which appeared in the monthly **Detective Comics** (May, 1939), bore the logo: "The Bat-Man, a mysterious and adventurous figure, fighting for righteousness and apprehending the wrongdoer, in his lone battle against the evil forces of society . . . His identity remains unknown."

The hyphen in the name did not last long. In this six-page story, The Batman has already fought criminals and his appearance has Commissioner Gordon puzzled. Bruce Wayne, wealthy socialite and friend of Gordon, appears

Batman and Batman illustrations accompaying this column © 1985 DC Comics, Inc.

Classic panels from a 1940s "Golden Age" Batman story.

in the first panel, but he's treated as just a background character until the closing panels reveal him to be "The Bat-Man!"

In a somewhat crude yet expressive style, the Kane art captures the contemporary Thirties atmosphere quite well. Backgrounds are sparse and often nonexistent, emphasizing the swift pace of the story and the focus of the action. When The Bat-Man subdues a murderer in the climax of the story, the man falls backward into an acid tank. To this The Bat-Man coldly comments, "A fitting end for his kind." These were the days when the vigilante spirit was popular, even more popular than it is now.

Detective number 27 was reprinted as a tabloid-sized, exact facsimile in 1974. Although the original magazine was a standard-sized Golden Age comic book, some misguided souls oome across one of these (minus its wraparound cardboard cover, which identifies it as a reprint) and believe they've found the real thing! The reprints include the then-ubiquitous Johnson Smith and Co. ads on their back covers but omit the firm's address. These ads feature about fifty different items and must have been impossible to read on the original comics, because they're still almost impossible to read with their miniscule print enlarged to tabloid size!

Kane clearly created Batman, but the character was immediately refined with the help of Finger. Finger filled in character and background details which occured prior to the first story. In Jim Steranko's **The History of Comics Vol. I**, (1970), Finger recalled those early creative stages.

"My first script was a take-off on a Shadow story. I didn't want Batman to be a Superman; I wanted Batman to be hurt. Everything he did was based on athletics, on using his astute wits and acute observation.

"Bruce Wayne's first name came from Robert Bruce, the Scottish patriot. Wayne, being a playboy, was a man of gentry. I searched for a name that would suggest colonialism. I tried Adams, Hancock . . . then I thought of Mad Anthony Wayne.

"Originally I was going to call Gotham City Civic City. I then tried Capital City, Coast City. Then I flipped through the phone book and spotted the name Gotham Jewelers and said 'that's it,' Gotham City. We didn't call it New York because we wanted anybody in any city to identify with it. Of course, Gotham is another name for New York.

"I patterned my style of writing Batman after the Shadow," Finger continued. "Also after the old Warner Bros. movies, the gangster movies with Jimmy Cagney, George Raft, Bogart. I always liked that kind of dramatic point of view. It was completely pulp style. Sometimes I overdid it, writing phrases like 'Night mantles the City.' But somehow it all seemed to work."

While Batman, like most comic book heroes, was heavily influenced by the hero pulp magazines of the day, Batman was no more based on these than was any other. Some have incorrectly accused The Batman of being inspired by the pulp hero The Black Bat, who was similar in many ways. The catch to that is that both characters appeared almost simultaneously, and in fact Batman appeared first. The Black Bat debuted in the issue of **Black Book Detective** cover dated July 1939. While each publisher thought that the other had somehow stolen the other's character, D.C. editor Ellsworth did some behind the scenes negotiating which ultimately settled things.

Kane actually got his idea for The Batman from the Mary Roberts Rinehart novel **The Bat**, which he had seen as a silent film in the Twenties. In the story, The Bat is a mysterious masked villain. Kane just turned the idea around.

The origin of Batman was not revealed until **Detective** number 33, where it appeared as a two-page vignette. Batman first sported gauntlets with fins in issue 36.

The Batman came from the school of rich idlers who don masks to fight

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

A new superhero role-playing game from England

People who play superhero roleplaying games usually read comics or at least used to read comics. When it comes right down to the basics what they want out of games is the same feeling that they experience from reading comics.

There are several ways to achieve that feeling, some of which have been discussed in previous columns and others which will be handled in future columns. This time, let's deal with playing with characters who are either identical or thematically similar to your favorite heroes and villains.

How do you come up with a hero just like Storm or Wolverine or Starfire or Batman? First, read the comics. These are the ultimate source, and reading them should give the gamer a fairly good idea of the actual powers possessed by the hero. Of course, some heroes are notoriously inconsistent in how they use their powers—Firestorm comes to mind immediately, and Jack of Hearts is not far behind. In this case, you have to take the powers you like and hope no one faults you for passing up other facets of the character.

Second, read source material on the heroes. In the gaming world, one major source is the **Marvel Super Heroes** game from TSR. While its simplistic mechanics and studied avoidance of any complexities in gameplay make it something of a disappointment for veteran gamers, the scenario modules are veritable storehouses of facts on the characters. Lamentably, one cannot simply buy the modules. You need the actual game to translate a module's and power's descriptions into whatever other game you may be playing.

PLAYING AIDS FROM THE SOURCES

Superhero gamers who want to be able to duplicate the heroes they have followed for years welcome publications such as the **Official Handbook to the Marvel Universe** and the **DC Comics Who's Who**. Unfortunately,

DEFENCE CLASS

DC	Description	Damage Dividers	Dodge Modifier
1	Tough Skin Grade 4 (Invulnerability)	HTK 6; HTC 5	Cannot Dodge
2	Tough Skin Grade 3, Armour Grade 3	HTK 4, HTC 4	Cannot Dodge
3	Tough Skin Grade 2, Armour Grade 2, Heavy Armour Plating, etc	HTK 4, HTC 3	Cannot Dodge
4	Tough Skin Grade 1, Armour Grade 1, Light Armour Plating, etc	HTK 3, HTC 2	0
5	Ultra-light chainmail, padded costume, scales fur, sheet metal, etc	HTK 2, HTC 0	0
6	Standard Superhero villain costume skin	HTK 0; HTC 0	+1
7-10	Superhero villain not in costume, thugs	HTK 0; HTC 0	+1
11-12	Non-gizmo powered individuals, thugs	HTK 0, HTC 0	Cannot Dodge

The charts for **Golden Heroes**

STRIKE TABLE

WEAPON CLASS OF ATTACK	DEFENCE CLASS OF TARGET 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
0	13	13	13	13	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6
1	12	12	12	12	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
2	11	11	11	11	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
3	10	10	10	10	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
4	9	9	9	9	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
5	8	8	8	8	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	2

neither of these publications do quite the job that the gamer needs done.

What a gamer trying to model published superheroes wants is some guideposts. Most games give strength ratings in how much a character can lift. If a maximum tonnage lifted is given by the publishers, then the gamer has a good handle on how to rate the hero in the game. Similarly, most superhero games give flight powers a particular speed. If we are told how fast a character can fly, we know what sort of flight to give our game simulation of the hero.

THE DC COMICS WHO'S WHO

This newest entry into the "real scoop" sweepstakes suffers by not providing many hard facts. Editor Len Wein says that "...half the fun of reading comics is in arguing who is stronger, who is faster, and who is more powerful." Perhaps this is so, but the gamer who is trying to determine Wonder Woman's strength so he or she can come up with a strength rating for the version he is using in a game is left in the lurch. A gamer needs to know at least what the relative strength of these people are. In the first volume of **Who's Who**, Aquaman is said to have "superior" strength while the Earth-2 Atom has "super" strength. Does anyone have any idea what the difference is? Is there a ranking system? Would Len Wein be so kind as to let us in on what it is?

The good points of DC's reluctance to pin down facts are obvious. Future writers are not limited by what super-strength means. Roy Thomas can have the Earth-2 Atom (and when did he gain superstrength in the first place?) strain at lifting a truck in **Infinity Inc.** while Gerry Conway has him casually lift an ocean liner in a JLA-JSA crossover. To many readers' minds, however, the entire point of such a book should be to quantify these things and give the writers (as well as the gamers) some guidelines. If the writers follow the guidelines, then continuity buffs such as your scribe won't have to cringe every time a hero who has shrugged off a mountain strains at a door.

THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK TO THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

Just to show that there can be too much of a good thing, Mark Gruenwald's **Handbook** attempts to explain too much and take onto itself more than is needed in such a book. Under the techno-minded impetus of Eliot Brown, the **Handbook** placed too much stress on "reality" at the expense of continuity, even though Gruenwald claims to be "Marvel's resident continuity freak."

For instance, the first volume of the **Hankbook** showed the decidedly middleweight Attuma capable of lifting 43,000 tons, yet the heavyweight Abomination could lift barely 100. Why? Because the Attuma listing was one of the first done, and the staffer who wrote it up simply checked back and found a picture of Attuma lifting an aircraft carrier. What does an aircraft carrier weigh? Don't everybody say "43,000 tons" at once.

In a conversation at the 1983 San Diego Comic Con, Gruenwald stated that he wanted to downvalue the superstrength level of most of the Marvel Universe because a person with too much strength just couldn't live in our world. He would continually be stomping through floors and ripping doors off their hinges and crushing his loved ones in an excess of passion. Therefore, even the Hulk was relegated to a lifting capacity of barely over 100 tons when he was enraged. This flies in the face of many instances in the Hulk's career when a hundred tons or an equivalent pulling capacity was nothing to him.

This policy attempts to put too much of the real world into the fantasy element of the comics. It also does not give enough credit to a person's ability to exercise control of his strength. The strongest weightlifter can hold an egg and the Hulk probably could too, if he wanted.

The major problem with this policy, however, is that several of the major writers for Marvel refuse to pay attention to the **Handbook**, thereby destroying its credibility. Even head honcho Jim Shooter had the Hulk hold up an entire mountain range and said specifically that he was holding up millions of tons of rock.

I, for one, look forward to the upcoming revamping of the **Marvel Handbook**, but do not expect to see much

CONTINUED ON PAGE 59

ballots we received, we got a lot of letters and I just wanted to share a couple of those as kind of a stage-setter, because I think we forget how important comics are in the lives of our readers.

(Feck reads a letter)"Dear Mr. Feck. I'm glad you take your comics seriously because I do. I have also been known to buy the other paper and read theirs, so I don't often squander a quarter to read **Marmaduke**. I don't have time to read the paper for some reason. I always go straight for **Cathy** and **Sally Forth** and I insist on reading them to my husband. My favorites can't be ranked in order because they're equal and I never miss reading them. My children expect me to read them **Hagar, Marvin** and **Mark Trail** every evening while dinner's cooking."

(Another letter) "Gentlemen, the Journal has removed **Gasoline Alley** from the comic page. I have to hunt for it somewhere in the classified section—" and he urges us to pick it up because this reader knows when a comic goes to classified it's on the hit list, ready to go.

This letter is from a 53-year-old: "My grandmother used to read the comics to me and I can still hear her laughing at **Snuffy Smith**. We waited for the Dispatch to come by truck from Columbus because we couldn't afford books. I used to cut the strips out and paste them in chronological order."

(Feck begins his own comments.) The comics seem to be touching an awful lot of lives in pretty intense ways. I think we who are journalists tend to forget precisely how important they are. We get more interested in juicy court trials and forget about comics. And we shouldn't forget about them just because they cost one heck of an amount of money. We spend $1,250 a week just for the rights to run the comics here in our own paper, just the rights. We spend $650,000 a year just to run the Sunday comics. the dailies probably cost about $20,000 a week to get them printed on the paper they use and the ink. That's a lot of money; more than a million dollars a year on comics alone.

Comics are sold by the syndicates to those of us who are the end users. they use the most expensive form of salesmanship known today. They make door-to-door calls and for the most part, the salesmen are welcomed in almost every newsroom in America because they are kind of like balladeers and troubadors. When they come by they tell us what's going on at other newspapers; they give us some rumors of the industry.

They make some very formal presentations. (He holds up a brochure) This is a new comic strip called **Clout Street**...it's very elaborate and they give you this and they give you a sales spiel and they spend about an hour of your time just trying to advise you to buy **Clout Street**. (Note: **Clout Street** is drawn by Pulitzer Prize-winning Chicago Tribune editorial cartoonist Dick Locher, who also draws **Dick Tracy**, the strip written by **COMICS FEATURE** columnist Max Collins.)

We make our own judgements not nearly as scientific as Henry (Schulte) did. I wouldn't take a comic into the newsroom to save my soul! That's probably the least representative group I ever met. And I certainly wouldn't take it home, either. What we try and do is provide something for everybody. We try and break it down so every interest, every age group will have something they'll find appealing (in the comics).

I want to share with you the results of the survey I took. We wound up tabulating 1,973 ballots. The five top favorites were:**Beetle Bailey** at 96.9% **Hi and Lois** at 95.3%; **Family Circus** at 95%; and...**Dennis the Menace** had 93% and **Hagar the Horrible**, 90.7%.

Then we did it by age, broke it up 18-24. (The favorites of that age group are) **Cathy, For Better or For Worse** and **Sally Forth**. In age group 35-54 the top three were **Sally Forth, Hagar** and **Cathy**. For those 55 and older: **Apartment 3-G, Judge Parker** and **Beetle Bailey**.

By sex, the top three for men were **Beetle Bailey, Hagar** and **Andy Capp**. Women: **Sally Forth** and **Apartment 3-G** tied for first; **Cathy** was second, **For Better or For Worse** and **Judge Parker** tied for third.

There weren't a whole lot of youngsters under 18 who contributed to the survey because it was placed in another section. But of the 70-some who responded, the ranking was **Marvin** first, **Family Circus** and **Cathy** second; third came **Beetle Bailey** and **Hagar**.

SOME COMMENTS FROM CANIFF

Schulte: Now we'll hear from one of our elder statesmen, Milton Caniff....

Caniff: About surveys you mean? Never won a survey in my life except for **Male Call**. There was no competition. (Note: **Male Call** was an extra strip Caniff did—at no pay—during World War II for military newspapers. It featured the curvaceous, ebony-haired Miss Lace.) It's an awful job doing what Luke has to do. He has about 200 items to buy from. All he has is hearsay; salesmen's wild-eyed, blue sky dreams of what this strip is going to do. There's no way to know for sure if it will or won't, because many an editor has turned down **Peanuts** or **Beetle Bailey** and later regretted it. How could he be clairvoyant? You just simply have to do it by the seat of your pants. And it's an impossibility to get it down to that sharp a focus.

Syndication, as such, is our life's blood. When I first began to realize drawing anything for one paper was a pretty good job...but doing it for a lot of papers? Now, that was something different.

The man who had Luke's job on the (Columbus) Dispatch was Henry Ryker when I was there (as a staff artist, 1925-30). I wasn't in syndication then, but I'd certainly hoped to be. Ryker used bits of wit and it's amazing to this day how they hold up. He said, for instance, to always draw for the man who buys the paper...Around 1927 he told me, "When you're drawing, always show a little

skin above the stocking." Of course, he was absolutely right. We're still doing this...I draw these babes all over the place and Mort (Walker) draws one poor little girl with a little cleavage (Miss Buxley) and he gets murdered for it!

Ryker's point was simply this: this is a commercial operation. You package the product so it pleases the greatest number of people and always draw for tomorrow's customer. He said the guy already has today's paper. Draw it so he'll buy tomorrow's paper.

Today, the story strips do not have the punch they did back then because television gives in a half-hour what it took ten weeks to do (in the comics). We catch the older readers because they grew up with continuity strips. It was their world. Now a new world has come up, of course, and it has to grab the kids, but it's harder to grab kids because they don't buy newspapers. The kids see (the comics) because (the papers) are left on the floor, especially on a Sunday.

Joe Patterson of the New York Daily News said to me when I first started doing **Terry and The Pirates**, "You've got seven million Sunday circulation and two million daily; I want to bring those together."

He said, "Do the kid stuff on Sunday and do the muscle stuff and sex during the week." It sounds innocent, but is a very serious business. He meant it. You were working for a home newspaper and it was a whole different ballgame because anytime anything gets controversial, it comes right down in the lap of the editor. People turn to him and ask, "Why didn't you catch this before it went in the newspaper?"

By the way, these (comics) are the most edited, the most looked at, the most turned upside down to see if it's dirty if you look at it this way. It's an arduous job. Of all things that go into a newspaper, I don't think there's any single thing that's edited as carefully and as sincerely as the comic strips. We must pretend to be all things to all readers.

AND SOME WORDS FROM MORT Schulte: And now the man whose **Hi and Lois** will always leave me with mustard on my face: Mort Walker.

Walker: Anybody who wants to be a syndicated comic strip cartoonist eventually has to go to the syndicates. Then his troubles begin. In some ways, it's an adversarial situation. A poor, young cartoonist with his little envelope full of strips and high hopes,

Miss Buxley — Walker's controversy.

meek and trembling before a syndicate editor who has a desk three miles long and a bunch of secretaries outside to help him out or maybe a lawyer and a couple of managers sitting around, and (the cartoonist) is absolutely shaking. He wants so badly to get a start and be syndicated he'll sign anything.

If you ever read a syndicate contract, you'll want to recede and say, "I'll give my name, rank and serial number." The syndicate contract is filled with you vill do this, you vill do det, you vill dis and nothing about what they're doing. They don't do anything, in fact. I'm only trying to get some sparks going here with Bill (Yates), my old childhood friend. Guys sign these things and then regret them for the rest of their lives, sometimes.

After the contract is signed a further adversarial condition leaps up: the syndicate becomes the cartoonist's censor. I can't tell you the list of censorable items they have in comic strips because, as Milton says, everybody thinks comic strips are for kids. You could have Ann Landers right next to the comic page talking about sleeping together and so forth, but in the comic strips for many years we couldn't draw certain things. We couldn't say 'whiskey'; we had to put corn squeezin's or kickapoo joy juice. You couldn't mention divorce, labor unions or death.

Then there's my navel battle with King Features. At one time, you couldn't show a navel. There was a show called I **Dream of Jeannie** where they painted over her navel because you weren't supposed to look at those things. Every time I drew a girl in a bikini I put a little dot, nothing but a little inoffensive ink dot. And the syndicate would take them out. One time I went down to (King Features Syndicate) and here's one of the artists sitting there with a razor blade shaving out the navel and putting it in this little box. I looked at it and 'Beetle Bailey's Belly Button Box' was written on it. It was full of these little dots. So, I figured if he liked navels so much to make a collection, I'll give him a lot of them. I'd give the girls two or three navels. One day the cook in **Beetle Bailey** received a large shipment of navel oranges. (The staff artist) gave up. Since then I've been able to draw those little dots (and have them printed).

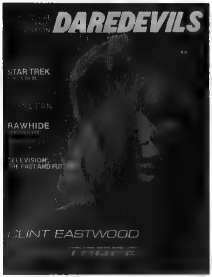
Contrary to the editorial cartoonists, the strip cartoonists **are** censored, and for our own good they say. I just showed Bill (Yates) a strip before I came here. The tennis pro in my strip wanted to see Miss Buxley's lobs. Bill said, "You can't do that!" Then he'd call me on the phone and ask, "You really want to do that?" I'm beginning to get to the point where I don't want to do it. That's the way the syndicate handles you.

I think the syndicates are uncomfortable with us, you know? They've got big desks, secretaries, they ride to work in an elevator, commute by train. We work in spare bedrooms over garages. Our tools of the trade are stubby little pencils and pieces of paper—that's all. They don't trust us because it really doesn't look like we're working. When you come (to the syndicate offices) to see everybody, you're wearing your jogging shoes, and they won't take you out to a decent restaurant. They've got to put you in a corner because you're strange, even though they take all your money off of you. You're not one of them.

(Next issue we will continue our feature on the fascinating world of the syndicated comic strip as Bill Yates of King Features gets his turn at bat along with the rest of the panelists and additional comments from Mort Walker and Milton Caniff.)

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY



DAREDEVILS explodes with action every month. When Indiana Jones cracks his whip, when Clint Eastwood cracks somebody's jaw or when James Bond cracks wise while cracking open a SPECTRE scheme to conquer the world, DAREDEVILS magazine is there!

We bring you comprehensive coverage of adventure films and television from the past to the future, from cowboys to road warriors, private eyes to countersplies, soldiers of fortune to pirates of the Spanish Main, space men to cave women; If they're tough enough, you'll see them in DAREDEVILS.

6 issues for $17.95

Make me a **Daredevil**. Enclosed find my check for $_____ for the items marked.

Single issue price $5.00 postpaid.

- ☐ Daredevils 1
- ☐ Daredevils 2
- ☐ Daredevils 3
- ☐ Daredevils 4
- ☐ Daredevils 5
- ☐ Daredevils 6
- ☐ Daredevils 7
- ☐ Daredevils 8
- ☐ Daredevils 9
- ☐ Daredevils 10
- ☐ Daredevils 11
- ☐ Daredevils 12
- ☐ Daredevils 13
- ☐ Daredevils 14
- ☐ Daredevils 15
- ☐ 6 issue subscription for $17.95

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____

STATE_____

ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

NMP NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

DAREDEVILS
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

ENTERPRISE is the magazine of STAR TREK!

Fact, fiction, interviews, speculation, character profiles, poetry, cartoons, satire & news - all of it about the most beloved science fiction series of all time. Need we say more?

6 issues for $17.95

I want to join the **Enterprise** family. Enclosed is my check for $_____ for the items marked.

Single issue prices $5.00 postpaid.

- ☐ Enterprise 1
- ☐ Enterprise 2
- ☐ Enterprise 3
- ☐ Enterprise 4
- ☐ Enterprise 5
- ☐ Enterprise 6
- ☐ Enterprise 7
- ☐ 6 issue subscription for $17.95

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____

STATE_____

ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

NMP NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

ENTERPRISE
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY

There is life beyond Star Trek and SFTV has it. Science fiction, fantasy and horror have been on television since the medium's birth. Remember Commander Cody? How about Fireball XL-5, Flash Gordon, Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, Dark Shadows, Battlestar: Galactica and now V, Otherworld and Tales from the Darkside?

SFTV covers fantastic television of the past, present and far-flung future, offering series guides, exclusive news reports, insightful criticism and much more in one beautifully-produced, monthly package. Come trip through the Time Tunnel with us and discover some Amazing Stories, at the low subscription price of 6 issues for $17.95

I want to enter the world of **SFTV** Enclosed find my check for $_____
for the items marked.
Single issue prices $5.00 postpaid.

- ☐ SFTV 1
- ☐ SFTV 2
- ☐ SFTV 3
- ☐ 6 issue subscription for $17.95

NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____
STATE_____
ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

NMP NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.
SFTV
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

The sun never sets on the British Imagination and FANTASY EMPIRE keeps you aware of the very best movies and television coming out of the United Kingdom. Advance looks at upcoming projects from the BBC, ITV, Gerry Anderson and many others, plus guides to PBS, Nickelodeon and Arts. You won't only get to read about these fine British productions, you'll know when you can see them as well!

On the scene photoreports, one of a kind interviews, career profiles, looks at the books that inspire many of these wonderful shows - FANTASY EMPIRE is the only magazine in the world that so thoroughly covers the British scene.
6 issues for $17.95

Enroll me as a fan of **Fantasy Empire.** Enclosed is my check for $_____
for the items marked.

- ☐ FE 1 $10.00
- ☐ FE 2 $10.00
- ☐ FE 3 $10.00
- ☐ FE 4 $10.00
- ☐ FE 5 $10.00
- ☐ FE 6 $8.00
- ☐ FE 7 $8.00
- ☐ FE 8 $8.00
- ☐ FE 9 $8.00
- ☐ FE 10 $8.00
- ☐ FE 11 $5.00
- ☐ FE 12 $5.00
- ☐ FE 13 $5.00
- ☐ FE 14 $5.00
- ☐ FE 15 $5.00
- ☐ FE 16 $5.00
- ☐ FE 17 $5.00
- ☐ 6 issue subscription for $17.95

NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____
STATE_____
ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

NMP NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.
FANTASY EMPIRE
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

SF MOVIELAND PRESENTS BOOKS & SPECIALS

SPOTLIGHT ON LEONARD NIMOY
His life in words and pictures (with and without pointy ears). The book covers every facet of both Spock and the man who is not Spock. $5.00.

SPOTLIGHT ON WILLIAM SHATNER
Includes a classic interview, a cornucopia of photos, coverage of his pre-Star Trek days and much, much more. $5.00.

SPOTLIGHT ON STAR TREK INTERVIEWS
Incisive conversations with Gene Roddenberry, Harlan Ellison, DeForest Kelley, George Takei, James Doohan, Walter Koenig, D.C. Fontana, Robert Bloch and Norman Spinrad. Plus a plethora of photos and behind-the-scenes info. $5.00.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE
Photos, diagrams and revealing interviews with special effects artisans provide a comprehensive picture of how the visual majesty of Star Trek was created. $6.00.

SPOTLIGHT ON DUNE
The whole story of how Dino De Laurentiis brought Frank Herbert's science fiction milestone to the screen, in the words of the creative geniuses who made it happen. Profusely illustrated with stills and behind-the-scenes photos. $5.00.

BLUEPRINTING THE SF UNIVERSES BOOK I
Shane Johnson's carefully-researched and beautifully-reproduced blueprints of ships, weapons and equipment from Star Wars, Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica and many other worlds of the future, collected in sturdy book form. $12.00.

BLUEPRINTING THE SF UNIVERSES GOLD FOLIO VOLUMES I, II, III, IV
Shane Johnson's inimitable designs from your favorite futureworlds, collected individually in gorgeous golden art folios for easy access to all space engineers. $12.00 each, all 4 for $44.95.

SF MOVIELAND COSTUME BOOK
An oversized collection of diagrams and instructions, compiled and edited by John Flynn, that enable you to create your own versions of your favorite science fiction characters' costumes! Softcover — $10.00. Deluxe Hardcover — $22.00.

THE VERY BEST OF THE SF MOVIE MAGS
A compilation of some of the finest interviews and articles about SF movies ever published, rarely seen because they were originally printed in small-circulation fanzines. A publishing event not to be missed! $10.00.

THE V FILE
James Van Hise edits the ultimate book for fans of the outrageous SFTV series. Exclusive coverage of the actors, writers and fx specialists accompanied by page after page of dazzling photos. Softcover — $10.00.
Deluxe Hardcover — $22.00.

TECHNICAL BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION FILMS
From costumes to phasers to the Death Star, this publication is filled with diagrams, patents and blueprints of all your favorite Star Trek and Star Wars elements. $10.00.

THE DOCTOR AND THE ENTERPRISE
A gathering (from ENTERPRISE magazine) of Jean Airey's delightful and hilarious stories of Dr. Who's cross-dimensional misadventures with the Star Trek crew. Square-bound trade paperback. Illustrated. $10.00.

A TRIBUTE TO TOM BAKER
An interview with and complete filmography of the beloved portrayer of Dr. Who. And pictures, pictures, pictures! $5.00.

SEASON GUIDES TO BRITISH TELEVISION
Includes complete rundowns of every episode of The Prisoner, Fireball XL-5, Sapphire & Steel and Blake's Seven, as well as Tom Baker's first season as Dr. Who. $5.00.

A TRIBUTE TO JON PERTWEE
Everything you've always wanted to know about the 3rd Dr. Who, in both his own and his admirer's words. $5.00.

DR. WHO COMPANION BOOK
Would you make a fit companion for Britain's greatest SF adventurer? Read this book of profiles of previous companions and find out just what it takes. $5.00.

SPOTLIGHT ON BRITISH SPIES
Bond. The Avengers. The Prisoner. In-depth looks at the suavest (and deadliest) action heroes of all under one cover. $5.00.

THE JAMES BOND DOSSIER
Cast and credit lists, thrilling photos and story synopses of each production, from Dr. No to Octopussy, in the most successful movie series of all time. $5.00.

NMP
NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

PLEASE ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

FORREST J ACKERMAN'S MONSTER LAND

PRESENTS BOOKS & SPECIALS

THE ALIEN COOK
(Our Goal Is to Serve Man)

When you have one of those late night cravings for Mimst Loaf like they make it on Bosun III or Deep Fried Thorn Quaig-style, there's only one place to go - THE ALIEN COOK, the only interplanetary cookbook with the Better Space and Gardens Seal of Approval.

Our galctic gourmet has collected rare recipes from Vulcan to Degoba to Transylvania, and offers them in both their native and Earth-equivalent ingredient versions. You can really cook all of these dishes yourself! Plus tips on space restaurant etiquette and what to do if your midnight snack turns out to be hungrier than you are. Handsomely illustrated, now available for $5.00 postpaid.

STEPHEN KING

The world's best selling author of horror and fantasy is celebrated with an insightful, profusely illustrated overview of his quivering career. Included is a chilling tale of terror written and drawn by Steve Bissette, noted artist of THE SWAMP THING comic book. Available now at $6.00 postpaid.

H.P. LOVECRAFT
The Elder God of Horror

The haunted genius who created the most palpably unnerving weird tales ever imagined is warmly (blood-temperature) remembered in this very special tribute.

Including an overview of his epic Cthulu Mythos as well as a touching memoir by Lovecraft's personal friend J. Vernon Shea, comic adaptations of two of his most chilling stories by Jaxon and Bruce Mckorkindale and a portfolio of HPL illustrations by master fantasy artist Hannes Bok. This is a fever-dream-come-true for anyone who has ever shivered at the thought of what might be making that strange noise in the darkness. $5.00 postpaid.

THE NEW FANTASY ILLUSTRATOR

A beautifully-printed, slickpaper book glowing with richly-colored reproductions of fantasy paintings by Tim Hildebrandt and Barclay Shaw. Included are in-depth interviews with the artists and with James Frankel, art director of Bluejay Books. A very special publication designed to be treasured for a lifetime, NEW FANTASY ILLUSTRATOR is now available for $12.00 postpaid.

Forrest J. Ackerman's Monsterland Presents:
THE TREASURE CHEST OF MOVIE MONSTERS
VOLUMES I & II

Loaded with rare pictures and packed with personal Ackermonster anecdotes! The internationally-recognized authority presents a treasure-trove of horror lore from over fifty years of fright films. The Ackermonster shares his consummate knowledge of every aspect of the world of monster movies in his own inimitable, highly-entertaining way.

From such classic protrayals as Boris Karloff's Frankenstein to such barely-remembereds as Kathleen Burke's Lota the Panther Woman, Forry's compendium of creatures covers them all. Available in two softcover volumes for $12.00 each postpaid, or together in one specially-designed, deluxe limited edition signed and numbered by Forrest J. Ackerman himself for $44.95!

NMP
NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

PLEASE ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

NMP LIBRARY

These are a series of high-quality, information-packed books devoted to fan favorites. Your letters are our guide as to which subjects are worthy of coverage. All books are on high quality paper and are perfect bound. They are designed to last and be enjoyed.

THE AVENGERS FILES

Everyones favorite British spies are featured in this unique series. Join Steed and Peel in recounting their adventures in the most detailed and accurate season guides ever created. Plus profiles of all of the key characters and loads of interviews with just everyone! This is the series you simply cannot afford to be without. The first two volumes are available individually or collected in a hardcover limited special collector's edition.

THE UNCLE FILES

UNCLE is back in the first series of its kind! Complete season guides, detailed technical drawings, loads of photos, lots of behind-the-scenes information. And the scoop on how the revival was made, the revival that almost happened and what the future holds in store for your favorite espionage team. Prepared by John Peel with the assistance of Glen Magee and Lynda Mendoza of UNCLE HQ. The first two volumes are available individually or collected in a hardcover special limited collector's edition. Forward by Norman Felton.

THE ANDERSON FILES

An in-depth interview with Gerry Anderson is only the beginning of this fine series. Also included are detailed guides to every single series, whether live or supermarionation. Plus special stories on how the puppets are made and loads of previously unavailable material. Available in two softcover volumes or collected in one hardcover limited collector's edition.

COMICS

Ron Goulart edits this series and only writing over 130 books could have prepared him for this. Contributors include Madman Jerry DeFuccio, Mike Barson, Will Murray(Mr. Pulps) and Sam Moskowitz. Complete comic book stories from the Golden Age are coupled with incisive and detailed articles and interviews to bring yo back to the golden memories of times gone by.

Premiere Issue; Timely Issue(with a complete history of the forefather of today's Marvel Comics Group); Batman (The complete story of the darknight avenger); DC History (a complete history of perhaps the most important comic book company of all time!).

No fan or film buff's library will be complete without these books—and they are all prepared with the loving care you expect from NMP. Every book is completely illustrated with literally scores of rare photos and carefully checked for accuracy.

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY

PLEASE ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

NMP

NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

COUPON PAGE

NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

MOVIELAND BOOKS

5.00 ..... Nimoy
5.00 ..... Shatner
5.00 ..... Interviews
6.00 ..... Technical Side
5.00 ..... Dune
12.00 ..... Blueprinting
12.00 ..... Folio I
12.00 ..... Folio II
12.00 ..... Folio III
12.00 ..... Folio IV
44.95 ..... Folio Special
10.00 ..... Costume
22.00 ..... Costume Deluxe
10.00 ..... Mags
10.00 ..... V File
22.00 ..... V Deluxe
10.00 ..... Technical Book
10.00 ..... Dr. & Enterprise
5.00 ..... Baker
5.00 ..... British TV
5.00 ..... Pertwee
5.00 ..... Companion
5.00 ..... Spies
5.00 ..... Bond

MONSTERLAND BOOKS

5.00 ..... Cook
6.00 ..... King
5.00 ..... Lovecraft
12.00 ..... Illustrator
12.00 ..... Trove
12.00 ..... Trove II
44.95 ..... Trove Deluxe Limited

FILES&BOOKS

10.00 ..... Comics: History of DC Comics
10.00 ..... Avengers I
10.00 ..... Avengers II
29.95 ..... Avengers Deluxe I
10.00 ..... UNCLE I
10.00 ..... UNCLE II
29.95 ..... UNCLE Deluxe I
10.00 ..... Gerry Anderson I
10.00 ..... Gerry Anderson II
29.95 ..... Gerry Anderson Deluxe I
7.00 ..... C:GA Premiere
5.00 ..... C:GA Timely
5.00 ..... CGA:Batman

BACKLIST

8.00 ..... FEL 1
5.00 ..... FEL 2
5.00 ..... FEL 3
5.00 ..... El Collector Sp 1
5.00 ..... El Collector Sp 2
5.00 ..... El Collector Sp 3
5.00 ..... El Collector Sp 4
5.00 ..... El Collector Sp 5
5.00 ..... El Collector Sp 6
10.00 ..... El 9
8.00 ..... El 11
8.00 ..... El 12
8.00 ..... Summer
5.00 ..... El 14
5.00 ..... El 15
5.00 ..... El 16
5.00 ..... El 17
5.00 ..... El 18
5.00 ..... El 19
5.00 ..... El 20
5.00 ..... El 21
5.00 ..... El 22
5.00 ..... El 23
5.00 ..... El 24
5.00 ..... El 25
5.00 ..... El 26
5.00 ..... El 27
5.00 ..... El 28
5.00 ..... El 30
5.00 ..... El 31
5.00 ..... El 31
5.00 ..... El 32
5.00 ..... El 33
5.00 ..... El 34
5.00 ..... El 35
10.00 ..... M 1
5.00 ..... M 2
5.00 ..... M 3
5.00 ..... M 4
5.00 ..... M 5
5.00 ..... CF 27
5.00 ..... CF 28
5.00 ..... CF 29
5.00 ..... CF 30
5.00 ..... CF 31
5.00 ..... CF 32
5.00 ..... CF 33
5.00 ..... CF 34
5.00 ..... CF 35
5.00 ..... CF 36

MASKS

45.00 ..... TB2001
63.00 ..... TB2003
50.00 2014
43.00 2007
43.00 2012
43.00 2013
43.00 2015
45.00 2011
19.00 ..... TB2034
19.00 ..... TB2033
53.50 ..... TB2037
53.50 2036
52.00 ..... TB1201
41.50 ..... TB1204
52.00 ..... TB1203
50.00 ..... TB2029
24.00 ..... TC 1411
38.00 ..... TB908

POSTERS, ETC.

4.48 ..... SW01
4.48 ..... SW02
4.48 ..... SW07
4.48 ..... SW09
4.48 ..... SW10
4.48 ..... SW04
4.48 ..... SW06
4.48 ..... SW05
5.50 ..... ST01
4.50 ..... ST08
4.50 ..... ST03
4.50 ..... ST04
5.50 ..... ST02
6.50 ..... ST06

CAPS AND PATCHES

5.95 ..... ST01EP
6.95 ..... ST01FP
3.00 ..... ST02E
3.00 ..... STo2F
3.00 ..... SI02S
3.00 ..... STo2L
4.95 ..... ST01
6.95 ..... STSCS

SOUVENIR PROGRAMS

4.00 SPECIFY: _____
5.00 SPECIFY: _____

BLUEPRINTS

11.95 ..... Officers
7.95 ..... Classified Files
10.95 ..... Ship Recognition
6.95 ..... marriage
8.95 ..... Battlecruiser
8.95 ..... Destroyer
10.95 ..... Dreadnought
9.95 ..... Bridge
7.95 ..... Bird of Prey
5.00 ..... Freighter
4.00 ..... Space Station
4.00 ..... Shuttlecraft
6.95 ..... Flight Manual
4.00 ..... Exteriors
8.95 ..... Weapons and Field Equipment
8.95 ..... W&FE II
8.95 ..... W&FE III
4.00 ..... Seaview
4.00 ..... Robby the Robot

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ITEMS DESIRED

PLEASE ALLOW 8 TO 12 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY
ALL ITEMS POSTPAID

NAME _____
CITY, STATE _____
ZIP _____
TOTAL COST ORDER: _____
DO NOT SEND CASH—
ALL ITEMS MUST BE PAID IN US FUNDS

Claster TV distributes **Robotix** and **GI Joe**.

Walt Disney Studios is "animation" in the minds of most people. Word is that the studio is planning a major reentry into the Saturday morning field.

Harmony Gold USA is currently producing 85 episodes of **Robotech**, an animated science fiction series budgeted at $8 million. The company has also crafted feature-length classics such as **Pinocchio** and **Call of the Wild**.

King Features Entertainment is a part of King Features, the newspaper syndicator of various comic strips, columns and features. The animation division is known for such offerings as **Popeye**, **The Beatles** and **Beetle Bailey**.

LBS Communications previously operated under the name Lexington Broadcast. LBS animated fare equals the output of all three networks combined, with over 150 hours of animation ranging from **Superfriends** to **M.A.S.K.**.

Lucasfilm is the company of George Lucas responsible for major theatrical movies such as **Return of the Jedi** along with television specials including one featuring the Ewoks. Now the company is entering the Saturday morning field with characters from the Star Wars mythos. Lucas being Lucas they enter the field with two shows, **Droids**(based on C-3PO and R2D2) and **Ewoks**.

Mirisch—Geoffrey—Depatie/Freleng work in conjunction with Hanna-Barbera to produce **The Pink Panther and Sons** for MGM/UA TV.

Lee Mendelson/Bill Melendez is the company behind the **Peanuts** show and specials. They are about to do the same thing for Betty Boop.

Nelvana Ltd. is a Canadian firm that almost animated **Elfquest**. They also did the **Herself, the Elf** special and have released various shorts to videotape.

Rankin-Bass was behind **The Jackson Five** and numerous other series. Now owned by Telepictures, the company is about to launch **Thunder Cats**.

Sepp is a licensor of European characters and original ideas and while it has brought the animated world and America **The Smurfs** and **The Snorks**, it does not produce any of its own animation.

Scholastic Productions is the child of Scholastic Publications and is not a producer of animation. It does get heavily involved as a co-producer or through co-venture arrangements.

SMF Entertainment currently offers **Jayce and the Wheeled Warriors**.

The Entertainment Network(NET) is a distribution company of recent vintage which has begun to offer classics in animated form.

TMS was spawned by Tokyo Movie Sinsha and has begat **The Mighty Orbots** for American audiences. The company is an interesting combination of Fred Silverman, former TV-exec, and Yutaka Fujioka, who owns TokyoMovie.

Viacom controls the offspring of Terrytoons including such characters as Mighty Mouse and Heckle and Jeckle.

Warner Bros. is one of the grand-old-masters of the field with such well-known celebrities as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Road Runner, Tweety & Sylvester and Chip 'n' Dale. It has a permanent piece of Saturday morning and also provides prime time specials.

Worldvision is the distribution arm of Taft Entertainment. This is the company that handles Hanna-Barbera and Ruby-Spears.

Next time around we will take a more detailed look at one of the studios.

HEROES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

The Batman was clearly a hero of darkness and mystery.

crime. In the pulps this subgenre was best exemplified by The Spider, while on radio by The Green Hornet. Batman even soon acquired a supercar not unlike the Hornet's Black Beauty.

What set Batman apart from Superman was that while the orphan from Krypton set out to sow justice across his adopted world, Batman struck out in the name of vengeance. When Bruce Wayne saw his parents shot down in front of his eyes by the thug Joe Chill, he was so traumatized by the event that it shaped his entire existence forever after. Some people have analyzed the character and come to the conclusion that what sets him apart from other heroes is that he's not just driven, he's insane. There is a grim exactness about Batman. He **always** responds to the summons of the Bat Signal, even in the recent story in **Detective** number 542, in which he was in the middle of an important meeting whose outcome might weigh the future of his new ward. Bruce Wayne **must** heed the call of The Batman, as though it has become some inbred call of the wild.

Cartoonist Dave Sim, who lampoons all facets of comics in his monthly **Cerebus the Aardvark**, picked on Batman specifically when he created the insane crimefighter The Roach (who became Captain Cockroach, who became Wolveroach).

In **Detective** 38 it was decided that Batman should gain a youthful sidekick that the younger readers could identify with. Only someone who wasn't a younger reader would have thought this a swell idea. Jules Feiffer, in his landmark book **The Great Comic Book Heroes** (Crown,1964), stated it most accurately when he said:

"The super grownups were the ones I identified with. They were versions of me in the future. There was still time to prepare. But Robin the Boy Wonder was my own age. One need only look at him to see he could fight better, swing from a rope better, play ball better, eat better and live better - for while I lived in the East Bronx, Robin lived in a mansion, and while I was trying, somehow, to please my mother - and getting it all wrong - Robin was rescuing Batman and getting the gold medals. He didn't even have to live with his mother."

The origin of Robin, Dick Grayson, was that he was part of a family of circus performers. His parents were killed when criminals sabotaged their trapeze act. Batman brought the murderers to justice and adopted Robin as his ward. Robin did not seem to age, becoming a teenager only some 25 years later in the Sixties, when he was portrayed attending high school.

The final solo Batman story of this early period, which had been scheduled for **Detective** 38, actually did not appear until **Batman** 1. The Darknight Detective battled Professor Hugo Strange and the bizarre monsters he created.

Finger only scripted the first handful of Batman stories. Editor Ellsworth then decided he wanted a new writer by the name of Gardner Fox. Fox introduced a love interest for Bruce Wayne named Julie Madison, then scripted one bizarre story after another in which she was mercilessly imperilled. Fox also introduced the Batarang and the Batgyro, which launched a tradition of Batgizmos that followed through the years.

In September of 1939, Kane acquired Jerry Robinson as his assistant. It was Robinson who came up with the name for Batman's sidekick, taking it from Robin Hood and even helping to design his costume. But for years Robinson was kidded because people believed that Robin was taken right from Jerry's own name.

Robinson also came up with the idea for The Joker. Initially using a playing card as the basis for the character's design, he abandoned that idea when Bill Finger showed him a photo of Conrad Veidt from the film **The Man Who Laughs**.

The still, even today, is an obvious dead-ringer for The Joker.

Initially, there was no origin for The Joker, who was introduced in the first and last stories in **Batman** 1. This was a

much more malevolent Joker than the one seen in later years. His victims were poisoned with a drug which took exactly 24 hours to take effect, leaving them dead with a hideous rictus grin on their faces. He was just one of the many wild and crazy villains who would populate the strip over the years, most of whom eventually found their way onto the **Batman** television series in the mid-Sixties.

When Neal Adams did his own version of The Joker in 1973, he decided that the character was and always had been gay. He not only returned the original ruthlessness to The Joker but added veiled references to his sexual preferences as well. When Bob Kane had this then-current development pointed out to him at the 1973 New York Comic Art Convention, he was taken aback and struck speechless when asked for his opinion. He actually seemed somewhat relieved when, after claiming that he had invented The Joker, it was pointed out that Jerry Robinson actually had. Kane reluctantly accepted that and said, "Well, maybe Robinson did invent The Joker, but I invented Batman!"

Writer Finger actually killed The Joker at the end of the second story in **Batman** 1, but Ellsworth recognized the character's future potential and had the last panel hastily rewritten and redrawn to reveal that after Batman and Robin left the scene, an ambulance attendant found that The Joker would live after all. If there was ever any villain who made countless reappearances, it was The Joker. For a time in the Seventies he even had his own magazine!

Kane's credit remained on the strip for many years, even though numerous artists drew the adventures of Batman and Robin. There was Robinson (who inked Kane's work for some time but whose own art was far superior) as well as Dick Sprang, whose art became most identified with the character in the late Forties and Fifties.

In the Fifties, Batman and Superman became just about the only costumed characters to survive in their own titles after the collapse of the Golden Age. Their books in the Fifties were often plagued by monsters and aliens from space and beings from the past and future. The Superman/Batman teamup title, **World's Finest**, was the prime example of this approach throughout the Fifties and early Sixties.

In 1964, it was decided to modernize Batman. So the "New Look" was introduced. This consisted of making Carmine Infantino the main artist as well as bringing on a newer, sleeker, smaller Batmobile than the huge old roadhog he'd been driving for years. Yet the older Batman strips were much more atmospheric. They were, after all, just funky old comics, so what did it matter if the old Batmobile looked to be half the size of a Mack truck?

It was also at this time that the unfortunate Batsignal background was added to Batman's chest emblem. Putting something bright in the middle of Batman's chest was like drawing a bullseye there. What a perfect target to aim at!

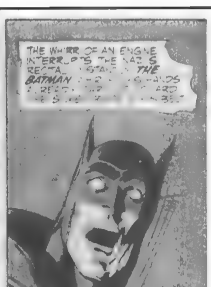
Just a couple of years later, the campy **Batman** tv series hit the air and was an instant hit. Many of us watching it cringed, and yet we accepted it. What other filmed superhero fare did we have? A year later **The Green Hornet** was much straighter, but apparently tv audiences wanted yucks along with their costumed crimefighters.

The worst part was that as long as the tv series was on, the comic book mirrored the campy approach. In one low moment, an editorial reply to a letter complaining about this stated quite matter-of-factly that as long as the tv series was on the air, the comic would reflect it. Actually, the series did boost comic sales, and when the show was cancelled a notable slump was immediately apparent.

In the Seventies, a young Neal Adams came swooping down on D.C. and all but made Batman his own. Along with writer Denny O'Neil, Adams attempted to bring back the old-style, moody Batman, even calling him "The Batman" for the first time in 30 years. Robin was hustled off to college and once more The Batman was a grim loner. With such classic villains as The Joker and Two-Face brought back and new creations like Man-Bat added, Batman was receiving more personalized attention than he had since his inception.

Other writers also teamed with Adams to bring the new/old moody look to the Caped Crusader's adventures. People such as Len Wein and Frank Robbins. Some issues featuring the Neal Adams version of Batman include **Detective Comics** 395, 397, 400, 402, 404, 407, 408 and 410 and **Batman** 234, 237, 243 - 245, 251 (which features The Joker, as described earlier) and 255 (in which Batman battles a real werewolf). **The Brave and the Bold** featured various Adams-drawn teamups, but the oddest was in number 93, in which Batman encountered **The House of Mystery**. Also inked by Adams, it's a special treat.

And yet the Batman which was done most like his 1939 incarnation was drawn by Berni Wrightson in **Swamp Thing** 8. Here we have the strange, long ears on the cowl and a panel on page 12 in which the Batman straddles two ledges while the wind blows his cape out in front of him. The cape looks about eight feet long! Page 16 of the same story features a panel in which



Neal Adams returned to the earlier Batman style.

Wrightson pays obvious homage to the action art of Adams. Only Michael Golden ever drew a Batman as moody as Wrightson's.

An often underrated artist who has kept up the Adams Batman tradition over the years, beginning in the early Seventies even while Adams was active with the character, is Jim Aparo. Over the past fourteen years, he's probably drawn the Batman more than any other artist. "Deathmask!" in **Detective** 437 is a prime example of the Aparo Batman.

Two issues later, in **Detective** 439, writer Steve Englehart portrayed the Batman as a man driven by the old vengeance motive in "Night of the Stalker!" The art by Sal Amendola was very much in the Adams tradition. Batman savagely tracks down the fleeing criminals who gunned down a boy's parents before his eyes. The final page depicts a Batman who has never recovered from the trauma of his own parents' deaths decades earlier.

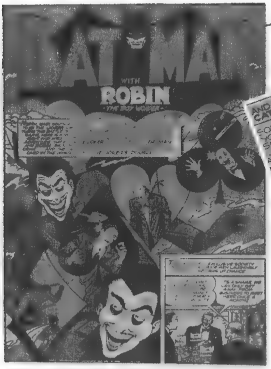
In **Detective** 443 (1974), Walt Simonson (now well-known for his work on **Thor**) tackled Batman in the final chapter of his classic Manhunter series. Simonson did Wrightson one better by not only including a panel in which Batman's cape looks eight feet long (page 5), but one where the cape looks twelve feet long (page 7)!

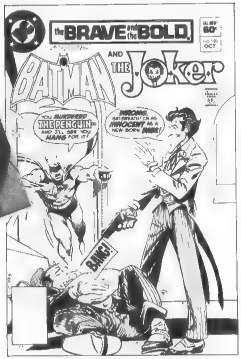
Periodically, other writers and artists have come along who liked what Adams did with Batman and wanted to do more of the same. In 1977, Englehart teamed up with artists Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin for **Detective** 471 - 476, 478 and 479, to produce a brief but exciting run of the character. Hugo Strange returned, was murdered, then had his spirit reanimated to exact revenge a few issues later. There were also appearances by The Joker and a new version of Clayface. Rogers had drawn Batman previously in **Detective** 468, but it wasn't anything special until Englehart's stories gave him more than the usual to work with.

When Englehart and Rogers left the character there were many others interested in trying their hands. Michael Golden drew a slick and moody Batman in **Batman** 295 as well as in **Batman Family** 19 and 20. The story in number 19 was inked by Craig Russell, whose work on Batman we'd soon see again. Golden also drew Batman in a 20-page story for the **Batman Spectacular** (summer '78). The same issue featured an excellent 30-pager drawn by Mike Nasser and Josef Rubinstein, along with a 15-page picto-fiction story written by O'Neil and illustrated by Rogers.

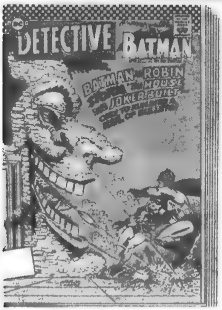
Detective Comics 481 featured a fine 17-page Rogers Batman tale that used the common strange detective tale motif. Even stranger was "Murder in the Night!" in the same issue, which was part one of a two-part story. With writing and layouts by Jim Starlin and finished art by Craig Russell, we were given another long-caped, slick Batman. This time his foe was an old man who had transferred his mind into the body of a powerful white ape. The finale in number 482 left us with a 36-page story by Starlin and Russell which stands as one of the best ever presented. Unfortunately, the team didn't do any other Batman tales. It was almost as though they were dabbling to see what the results would be.

In the Eighties, The Batman has been drawn by many D.C. regulars, most notably Don Newton. In **Detective** 526, Jason Todd, who became the new Robin, was introduced. The Gerry Conway story was drawn by Newton and Alfredo Alcala. The parents of Jason, circus people, were brought in to help on a case because of infor-





Over the years The Joker and The Catwoman changed in many ways.



mation they stumbled onto. They're trapped and murdered by the inhuman King Croc. Just as Bruce Wayne experienced torment in "Night of the Stalker," Dick Grayson experiences a flashback of grief to his own parents' deaths . . . The story also features The Joker, Clayface, Two Face, The Penguin and others in its 56 pages. The issue marked the 500th appearance of Batman in **Detective Comics**.

Even more remarkable was **Batman Special** 1 (1984), which featured a 40-page story by Michael Golden and Mike DeCarlo. Apparently Golden was unable to complete it as the last ten pages seem to be entirely drawn by DeCarlo.

Other artists, such as Gene Colan, have been doing notable Batmans at D.C. But other than the occassional flash brought by somebody like Golden, nothing of a spectacular nature is being done with the character at the moment. Batman, however, continues to hold a special charm for newer artists. Even Frank Miller did a story a couple of years back, a Christmas story no less. Artists such as Adams, Starlin, Russell, Golden and Rogers have shown that the character still has a special magic waiting to be drawn to the surface. They've set standards which others can't help but be attracted to. They've also shown why there's still an intangible attraction in the Batman even after 45 years.

In the works is a live-action Batman motion picture which intends to approach the character with the same respect that the first Superman movie did the Man of Steel in 1978. Word has it that some of the storyline is being based on the Englehart/Rogers issues of **Detective** from 1977. It will definitely not resemble the mid-Sixties tv show. Adam West reportedly approached the producers about being in the film and they said that at best they'd invite him to the premiere. They want to stay as far away as possible from identification with the campy tv series.

While Dick Grayson recently quit being Robin and adopted a new identity, The Batman, it seems, will always be The Batman. And well he should be.

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

ODDS & ENDS PART TWO

Not all the prospectors who journeyed to California during the Gold Rush struck it rich and not all of the publishers who got into the comic book business during the Golden Age came up with magazines that thrived or even survived. Once again we'll look at some of the titles that failed to make it in the boom times of forty and more years ago.

Among the conspicuous failures of the period was a magazine with the somewhat doom-oriented title of **Crash Comics**. It began with a May, 1940 issue and collapsed a few months later with its fifth issue. Published by one of the outfits that later metamorphosized into Holyoke Publishing, **Crash** did manage to introduce a character who lived longer than it did. This was Cat-Man and he went on to become one of the more successful second bananas of the Forties. Unlike most of the book's other characters, he didn't come aboard until the fourth issue. The contents of **Crash** were produced by a small shop run by Bert Whitman and the Cat-Man origin story looks to have been drawn by him, with a possible assist from Irwin Hasen. In it we're told how young David Merywether, after his scientist father as well as his mother and sister are slaughtered in deepest India by "jungle wildmen," is taken off and reared by a maternal tiger. What happens as a result is quite impressive -- "Through years of jungle association David is endowed with all the faculties of the cat family, to which tigers belong. He can see in the dark, leap from trees and buildings. His eyes glow and light up in the darkness." Even better, he has nine lives.

The description of Merrywether's decision to become a costumed crimefighter is splendid. "His return to the world we live in finds him a disappointed addition. The evils of the world scar his sense of righteousness, so that he decides to devote his life to combatting evil. Due to his marvelous exploits, he becomes known as the **Cat Man.**'"

His earliest costume combined Batman's cowl with Tarzan's leopard skin, adding tights, boots and very itchy-looking fur mittens. In his first adventure, Cat-Man is stabbed and killed by a gangster. But that doesn't slow him up for long. "His guardian angel in the fur of the tigress that mothered him gives him the second of his nine lives!" On his second outing, this one definitely drawn by Hasen, he gets killed again. This time it's a foreign spy, who buzzes him in a plane and gives him a shot of a deadly "blood-freezing ray." He comes to life again, although the copy fudges by pretending this is the second of his nine lives. After the magazine folded, Cat-Man, with that old tigress in his corner, came back to life in the spring of 1941 in **Cat-Man Comics.**

The character everybody at **Crash** obviously hoped would give them a winner in the superhero sweepstakes was Strongman, who was there from the first issue decked out in a blue and gold uniform that made him look somewhat like a fugitive from a marching band. According to a caption in his debut yarn, "he has the strength of a hundred

elephants, the speed of a racing car and skin with the toughness of a rhinocerous (sic)." He got his powers not at a zoo, but simply because "for many years he has followed the exercises of a secret book of yogi (sic.)." To the everyday world he was Percy Van Norton, "happy-go-lucky playboy," who emphasized his upperclassness by wearing a monocle and using a very long cigarette holder. Drawn by an artist who sometimes signed himself Pagsilang R. Isip, Strongman was a dull fellow. His adventures, which usually stretched to the then-unprecedented length of nineteen pages, were bland and tedious and mostly showed him saving mythical European countries from invaders. Of all his many feats of strength my favorite occured when he was saving Polaria from invaders. In that one he's in need of a weapon and so "from a nearby rock he fashions a boomerang with his powerful hands."

The third staff superguy was there for all five issues, too. He was called The Blue Streak and like Strongman he specialized in cleaning up messes in Europe. "Self-appointed foe of ruthless dictators, The Blue Streak has pledged himself to remove 20th Century tyrants from the face of the earth in order that man might enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Like the Green Hornet, the popular radio hero whose exploits the Whitman shop was adapting to comics, the Streak had an oriental valet-driver.

For science fiction buffs **Crash** offered Solar Legion. It was "the story of Adam Starr . . . the saga of the Solar Legion, an organization yet unfounded, which guards the last frontiers of an era yet unborn." What made this space opera interesting was its artwork by a young Jack Kirby. Kirby was a revolutionary just about from the start. He used layouts that were like nobody else's, understanding that comic books weren't newspaper strips. The later adventures of the Legion are by another hand.

Because comics in the Golden Age were eclectic, all sorts and conditions of artists were welcome - newspaper veterans, pulp illustrators, art school kids. George Storm had been a newspaper cartoonist since before the First World War. His adventure strip, **Bobby Thatcher**, was one of the most successful in the 1920s and early 1930s. For **Crash Comics** Storm drew, anonymously, two features. The Flying Trio starred Ray, Mac and Low, the latter a Chinese, flying soldiers of fortune. They too fought against invaders of mythical European countries. Buck Burke was a pith-helmeted zoologist with the slogan "he gets 'em alive" Buck. Kid readers of the day couldn't have helped being reminded of that real-life big game hunter Frank "Bring 'Em Back Alive" Buck. Storm had a quirky, lively style and adapted it well to the comic book page. The scripts were no better than the others in **Crash** but Storm's artwork was fun to behold.

Filling out the pages of **Crash** were Secret Agent Z-2, Jane Drake, a girl detective in the Nancy Drew mold, and Shangra. This last, obviously inspired by **Lost Horizon**, dealt with Joan Joyce and Jack Flynn, star reporters, who accidentally land in an unknown region of Tibet and encounter a fellow named Shangra who's "endowed with great mastery of magic, supernatural ability and sorcery." In the final issue Bob Preston, not to be confused with the movie actor, was added. This Bob Preston was an explorerer hunting for "the long-sought tomb of Tut Sha-Hi'amen."

Cyclone Comics, published by yet another company that subsequently merged with Holyoke, also came along in the spring of 1940 and flourished for but five issues. The designated hero of the book was Tornado Tom - don't ask me why they didn't name him after the magazine and call him, say, Cyclone Sam. Tom, drawn by Jon Small, was around for so short a time he never even got a costume. He did his superhero work, which consisted mostly of beating up and choking labor agitators and spies, wearing an old work shirt and a pair of farm pants. Tom came by his powers accidentally. One day, much like Judy Garland in **The Wizard of Oz**, he is carried away by a Midwest cyclone and "whirled above the earth for hours." Tom is finally deposited in another state, unhurt and with a strange feeling of power. "He discovers that in some remarkable way

Jack Kirby drew Solar Legion.

the cyclone has imparted something of its strength and violence to him, making him the physical match for a dozen ordinary men and capable of great speed." Being whirled across state lines has also given Tornado Tom amnesia. In between his heroics, he strives to find out who he really is, remarking, "I may have a mother waiting for me to come home." Unfortunately, his career came to an end before he ever found his way back to her.

Tom shared the magazine with an assortment of other unsensational character. Among them were D. Voltz the Human Generator, who later changed his name to Volton; Robo, a humanoid robot; Mr. Q, a master of disguise; King Anthony, who became the ruler of a fantasy kingdom after he "fell through a hole in the Arctic Ice into the strange country of Artica;" and King Vito of the Moon, who had sci fi adventures. **Cyclone**, by the way, was the only GA magazine to offer not one but two kings per issue. Also to be found in its pages was a feature about state trooper "Buzz" Sawyer, beating Roy Crane to the name by three years. Although the artwork in the magazine was good, it tended to be on the quiet side. Charles M. Quinlan, the artist who inherited the Cat-Man when he got his own book, drew both the state trooper and the Human Generator adventures, and handled King Vito as well. Ray Willner did Mr. Q and Robo. George Papp, soon to draw the Green Arrow over at DC, took care of King Anthony.

Yet another Holyoke title that flopped was **Captain Fearless**. It made it through just two issues in the summer of 1941. The magazine, understandable for one published on the brink of America's entry into WWII, was enthusiastically patriotic and offered three superpatriots as characters. The Captain himself came from a long line of fighting men and his full name was John Fearless. While walking through Boston Cemetery he encountered the ghost of the first John Fearless, a veteran of the Boston Tea Party and the War of Independence. Though young John was a military cadet, his ancestor didn't want him to fight overseas but rather to concentrate on "enemies harbored within our borders!" Old John vanishes, but leaves a package behind. The package contains a Daniel Boone costume and a magic horn inscribed: "Blow only in great danger." Donning the buckskin, Fearless went on to thwart foreign agents with names like Van Groon.

Citizen Smith, being a professional common man, didn't wear a costume. He ran around, much like our friend Tornado Tom, in rumpled slacks and a shirt. What powers he had also came from a ghost. The ghost was that of his father, who happened to be the Unknown Soldier. Smith's first adventure pitted him against a foreign agent named Herr Greeder. Greeder has taken over the union in an airplane plant and talked the workers into striking. Citizen Smith quickly decides that no loyal American would strike unless pushed by outside troublemakers. He beats up Greeder and the workers forget all about higher wages, shorter hours or whatever it was they were going to strike about. Artwork on this one was by Irwin Hasen

Captain Fearless' third patriotic character was a lady who donned a red, white and blue costume to do her good deeds. The plucky young woman's escapades had a Washington, D.C. setting. Pretty blonde Joan Wayne worked as a stenographer but, unknown to anyone, she had a loftier mission in life. "Organized bands of corrupt politicians and diplomats have been operating against the best interests of the government in Washington. The FBI has been powerless to get at the actual heads of the ring, until a strange figure enters the picture: a girl who wears a daring red, white and blue costume and calls herself **Miss Victory**."

The foreign agents Miss V was out to get had rather strange notions about how the government functioned, notions apparently shared by the scriptwriter. Rather than blowing up dams, sabotaging munitions plants or stealing state secrets, they worked to keep the Senate from passing anti-Nazi bills and tried to sneak pro-Nazi clauses into bills that did get passed. Come to think of it, maybe those notions aren't so strange after all.A lot of lobbyists use similar techniques.

At any rate, Miss Victory always put a stop to such subversive tricks. Unable to fly on her own, she got to the fray in her convertible. She alone survived the collapse of the magazine, going on to work in **Captain Aero.**

The book offered several characters of a less gung-ho nature. There was a hollow-eyed chap in a purple cloak - "Mr. Miracle! A strange being possessed of all of the terrible forces of the cosmic." Also on the staff was a gent who, like The Spirit, did his crimebusting in a suit, hat and mask - "From out of the darkness comes Alias X, an unknown avenger, to destroy the forces of crime and evil beyond the reach of the law." Ray Willner, teamed with the late Allen Ulmer, produced these two. Quinlan, again on the side of law and order, drew Sergeant "Dick" Carter of the U.S. Border Patrol. Also crowded in were Rusty Dugan in the French Foreign Legion, Diamond Jim and Grit Grady, Adventurer.

In our next go-round, we'll take one more look at some of the losers of yesteryear and then, hopefully cured of flop fever, return to the more successful characters and comics of the Golden Age.

FAMOUS QUALITY HANDMADE DON POST MASKS

GREMLINS

TB2034 Gizmo
$19.00

TB2033 Stripe
$19.00

TB2037 Custom Gizmo
$53.50

TB2036 Custom Stripe
$53.50

FACES TO REMEMBER

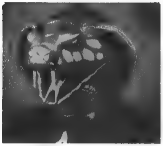
TB1201 Frankenstein
$52.00

TB1204 Creature
$41.50

TB1203 Phantom
$52.00

TB2029 E.T.
$50.00

TC1411 Alien
$24.00



TB908 Sargoth
$38.00

PLEASE ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

SOUVENIR PROGRAMS

OFFICIAL COLLECTORS EDITIONS

These books are 64 pages, 8½" x 11", full color. These were used in place of theatre program books for these movies. Much more information!!! **$5.00 each postpaid.**

Blade Runner
The Empire Strikes Back
Raiders of the Lost Ark
Return of the Jedi
Indiana Jones & The Temple Of Doom
Gremlins

SOUVENIR PROGRAMS:
These are the official theatre program books sold at the theatres during the release of the movies. Each one is 9" x 12", 20 pages with lots of pictures, credits and cast. $4.00 each postpaid.

Alien
Battlestar: Galactica
Buck Rogers
Close Encounters
Dracula
Flash Gordon
Heavy Metal
Invasion of the Body Snatchers
Lord of the Rings
Moonraker
Secret of Nimh
Star Trek: The Motion Picture ($6.50)
Star Trek: The Wrath Of Khan ($6.50)
Star Trek: The Search For Spock ($6.50)
Star Wars
Spy Who Loved Me
Superman II

PLEASE ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

MY PAL SUPERMAN

Jimmy's WEIRDEST TRANSFORMATION

BY JACOBS & JONES

"Will!" Kal exclaimed, and when I had brushed by him into his apartment he added, "Why didn't you tell me you were coming? I could have flown you out."

"Don't worry about it, Kal," I said. "I'm taking a vacation from work and I was in the mood to drive across country."

Kal pondered my words for a moment and said, "Being accustomed to getting about at interstellar speeds, I tend to forget that travelling can be pleasurable for travelling's sake alone, not merely the means of getting from Point A to Point B. But now, using my powers of total recall, I remember how much I enjoyed my long space voyage from Krypton to Earth as a tot. Did you just come out here to see the sights?"

"It's more than that," I said. "I quit my job at the sofabed showroom and I just didn't have the stomach to start looking for another lousy job right away. I thought I'd come east and look around. I might even consider moving out here."

"Metropolis is a nice city. It's bothered by gangs of hoods and occassional supervillains, but the weather is generally pleasant. And of

Superman, Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane © 1965, DC Comics, Inc.

course, with your emergency signal watch you could always summon me if you happened to run up against Titano the Super-Ape, the Legion of Super-Creatures or some other menace."

"Safety isn't my main concern," I said. "After all, my current city of residence, San Francisco, has one of the highest per capita violent crime rates in America. But I need to get out of my rut. Perhaps in a bigger city I can find more interesting work and more distractions to bring me out of my apartment."

"It's encouraging to hear you're taking steps to help yourself, Will. I think this might be better for you than your dream of moving to a quiet bungalow in a small town. I know that when I was a young man in Smallville I came to realize, as fond as I was of my boyhood friends Ross and Lana and my loyal superdog Krypto, that in order to serve mankind effectively as a champion of the oppressed, I really should be in the thick of things."

"Maybe you could help me get settled in here," I said.

"Of course," said Kal. "I can always get you a job as a cub reporter for the Daily Star. I'll have Jimmy show you the ropes. He's been a cub reporter for decades."

"Newspaper work looks like it might be pretty interesting," I said.

"Yes, and an excellent way of keeping abreast of world disasters which require the intervention of a Superman," said Kal. "With your literary background, writing the stories will be a snap. My telescopic vision now reveals that, although my alter-ego Ken Clarkson was allowed to leave early today, my coworkers Lois Lang and Jimmy White, and my editor Perry Olsen, are still hard at work on some fast-breaking newsstories. What say we fly over and have a look around?"

"That would be swell," I said. I wrapped myself in Superman's cape without having to be asked, and he carried me leisurely over the sunny city of Metropolis.

"Now remember," he said, "no one at the Daily Star knows my secret identity, although Lois for one would be thrilled to discover it and Perry would consider it a major scoop. I'll appear as Superman, the Man of Steel, in order to avoid getting burdened with work in my Ken Clarkson identity, which always happens when I drop by after hours. So please refrain from making any reference to the fact that I am, in reality, reporter Ken Clarkson."

"Why haven't you ever revealed your secret identity to your old pal Jimmy, when you revealed it to me so freely?" I asked.

"You must understand the nature of my relationship with Jimmy, Will. He's like a son to me. Maybe he's like the eternal child in us all. I like him very much, but I don't trust much to his emotional maturity. I'm afraid he couldn't resist the temptation to be known as the lad who revealed Superman's secret identity. Jimmy loves attention. I think you'll be able to tell that by the way he dresses."

"I only hope I can keep Jimmy and Perry's last names straight," I said. "I'm so accustomed to reading about them in the comics as Jimmy Olsen and Perry White."

"Don't worry, Will. We're all on a first name basis at the Daily Star."

At last we reached the skyscraper with the huge star rotating on its roof. From force of habit, Superman flew us in through the window of a storage closet.

He chuckled, "I'm so used to having to change at super-speed into my Ken Clarkson identity before I enter the news office."

No one looked up as we crossed the newsroom to the sound of clacking typewriters, until we came upon Lois, who gazed at Superman in rapture. "OH, hello Bill," she said after a moment. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," I said.

"Are you published yet?" she asked.

"Er . . . not just yet," I replied.

"Ken Clarkson asked me to bring Will by and show him around," said Superman. "He's thinking of becoming a cub reporter."

"Jimmy's the one to talk to about that," said Lois. "Jimmy's been a cub reporter longer than anyone. He's over there, dusting off his assorted trophies of outer-space adventures with you, Superman."

Where Lois pointed we saw a young man with bright orange hair and freckles, wearing a plaid green suit and an orange polka-dot bowtie. When he saw Superman, he dropped everything and hurried over.

"Gosh Superman, it's good to see you!" he beamed. "I was just polishing

up the souvenir ray-gun from another world which almost gave away Supergirl's secret identity during my first encounter with the Superman Emergency Squad!"

"My goodness, I'd almost forgotten about that," said Kal.

Hearing this, I realized just how long Superman and Jimmy had been pals. I began to feel a little like an intruder.

"Jimmy," said Superman, "this is my other pal, Will Jones."

Jimmy stiffened a little at the name, but he shook my hand. "Glad to meet you, pal. You're the novelist, right?"

"Well," I said hesitantly, "I do like to write."

"Will might like to write for your paper, Jimmy."

"Oh yeah? Well, believe you me, it isn't easy. I've been here for years and I'm still a cub reporter."

Suddenly, a bellow rent the air. "Jimmy! What in tarnation are you doing, flapping your lips over here while there's a volcano erupting in the South Pacific? Great Caeser's Ghost! Am I paying you to be a conversationalist or a newshound?"

"Uip . . . sorry, Chief," said Jimmy.

"You must be Perry," I said, extending my hand to the smirking, white-templed man who emerged from a cloud of smoke in back of me.

"Excuse me Chie . . . er, Perry," said Superman. "Did you say there was a volcano erupting in the South Pacific?"

"Yeah, just north of Ponape," said Perry in his gravelly voice. "It just came over the Associated . . . " But Superman was gone before Perry could finish the sentence. "Great Caeser's Ghost! Why don't people listen to the answer if they're going to ask a blankety-blank question?"

"Er . . . uip, Chief?" said Jimmy. "This is Superman's acquaintance, Will Jones." I noticed that he refrained from using the word pal. "He'd like to try his hand at being a reporter."

"Great Caeser's Ghost! Suddenly everybody wants to be a reporter!" snorted Perry. "I hope you at least plan to be more than a cub reporter for the rest of your life. Tell me something, son: Do you like to write?"

"Well . . ." I began, but just then Superman returned and stood beside me as if he'd never left.

"Perry, there's no longer a volcano erupting in the South Pacific," he said. "I dropped the whole story off with my friend Ken Clarkson, and he'll have it in for the morning edition. Now how about letting Jimmy off early so that he and Will can talk?"

"Jeepers!" said Jimmy.

"Great Caeser's Ghost!" shouted Perry as he stormed back into his office.

"I have a date with my steady girlfriend, Lois' younger sister Lucy Lang tonight," Jimmy said. "But gee! I don't get to see you much anymore, Superman! Let's go to the little tavern around the corner that the ace newsmen like to frequent. Tell me, pal: Should I wear my orange suit with my polka-dot green bowtie or my green suit with my polka-dot orange bowtie?"

"Just come as you are," said Kal.

"Zowie! A night on the town with my pal Superman!" said Jimmy. "Wait'll the girls see me! I'd better get my hat."

A number of people stared at us as we entered the bar, no doubt because of the bad coordination of our clothes: Jimmy in his green suit and white hat with the orang ploka-dot band, Kal in his red, yellow and blue caped costume, and I in my slate blue, double-breasted suit and tie. But there's one thing I like about America: You can always go in a bar and get a drink, no matter what people think of the way you look.

We sipped our scotch and waters, and Jimmy gave me advice on being a cub reporter.

"If you do the job right, it can be the most rewarding career in the world. Golly, I'm probably the only cub reporter in America with his own fan-club. But it always helps if you're not afraid of adventure. Thanks to my pal Superman here, I've had more than my share of fantastic adventures!"

"I've had a few myself," I said.

Jimmy knocked back a shot and scowled. "Oh yeah? Have you been to the bottle-city of Kandor?"

Superman said, "It's funny you should mention that, Jimmy. Will recently became one of the few earthlings to visit that Kryptonian city which was shrunken into a bottle by the green interplanetary raider Brainiac. We had quite a time."

Jimmy looked crestfallen. "Whillikers, Superman, you should've taken me. After all the adventures we've had together in Kandor as the masked superheroes Flamebird and Nightwing, I'd have been a big help."

"I'm sorry Jimmy," said Kal. "It was a spur of the moment decision. It didn't even occur to me to ask."

"Jiminy," said Jimmy, draining his glass morosely. "Next thing you know, you'll be visiting our Thirtieth-Century pals the Legion of Superheroes without telling me."

"Well, er, why don't we take a walk," Kal said uncomfortably. Personally, I would have told Jimmy the truth. He was getting a little too possessive of our mutual pal. But I kept my piece as we stepped outside.

Jimmy's face was blazing almost as brightly as his hair with the whiskey he had drunk. He was entreating Superman to visit his apartment and go through his Superman scrapbook when Kal looked suddenly away.

"Excuse me, fellas," he said. "I'll be right back." As he flew away, I heard him mutter, "I thought I took care of that volcano."

"So," said Jimmy, "how long have you known Superman?"

"Not long," I said. "But we've grown close quickly."

Jimmy blurted out, "Oh yeah? As close as he and I? Who had the first emergency signal watch? Who do you read about in the comics? Not Superman's pal, Will Jones!"

"I'm sure you're still Superman's best pal," I said.

"Damned right I am!" he exclaimed. "Damned right I am! So how come you keep taking up all of his time? After all I've been through for him! Thanks to him, I've been transformed into a human skyscraper, a bird boy and a living Pinocchio! But who does he spend his time with? You! Have you ever undergone a bizarre transformation for Superman?"

"Well, once we took a trip into the distant past and the sorceress Circe turned me into a horse," I said.

Jimmy was yelling now. "A horse? You call that a transformation? Why, when I became a giant turtle-man, I tore up the Metropolis Bridge and stuffed it into a volcano! When absent-minded Professor Potter turned me into the human flame-thrower I stopped a gang of hoods with my heat-breath! When an imp from the Fifth Dimension turned me into a human porcupine I could fire quills from my body like arrows! And when I was the super-lad of space I could beat the metal-eating mole of Zolium with one hand tied behind my back! A horse? Bull!"

"I don't think it's my bizarre transformations that form the basis of my relationship with Superman," I said calmly.

"What then? Literature? Ha! When I was Jimmy the Super-Brain I could quote Hamlet standing on my super-enlarged head! I still can, listen: 'To be or not to be, that is the . . . !'"

I interrupted him. "I'm sure you're a much better pal for Superman than I am."

"Don't patronize me! You think I'm drunk, don't you? Well, I know who Superman likes best. Don't think your phony politeness fools Jimmy White! I'll bet you even managed to worm his secret identity out of him, didn't you?"

That raised my hackles. It was one thing to belittle my adventures as a horse. But it was quite another to cheapen that most sacred of honors, keeping Superman's secret identity.

"It's too bad about Circe," sneered Jimmy. "I guess Superman never did get you changed all the way back. You're still part of a horse!"

"Listen Buster, don't push your luck!" I said.

He squared off in front of me. He obviously wanted to fight. I didn't want to take the first poke for fear he'd suddenly become Elastic Lad, the best-known of his many transformations, and have the fight wrapped up in seconds.

He swung at me, but just then a blur of blue and red interposed itself between us. Jimmy's fist drove straight into the chest of the Man of Steel.

"Eeeyow!" cried Jimmy.

"Why Jimmy, I'm surprised at you," Kal said. "I've seen you transformed into a werewolf, a witch doctor and an alien from Jupiter. But I never thought I'd see the day when you were transformed into an obnoxious drunk."

"I'm sorry, Superman, but . . . gulp . . . I hate to think that I'm not your best pal anymore."

Superman put his hand on Jimmy's shoulder. "Jimmy, you'll always be my best pal. If I seem to neglect you sometimes, it's only because I want you to learn to be more independent. But no pal will ever mean more to me than you."

"Holy cow, Superman," said Jimmy, drying his tears. "You don't know what it means to me to hear that. I was afraid you liked Will more than me. I couldn't shake the fear that you had revealed your secret identity to him while continuing to conceal it from me."

"Well . . . . er, Jimmy," Superman began.

"He hasn't told me a thing," I said hastily.

"Now why don't I fly you home, so you can get a good night's sleep and write a big scoop tomorrow?" asked Kal.

"Sure. Thanks Superman," said Jimmy. "Shucks Will, I'm really sorry. We ought to get together for some kind of bizarre adventure real soon."

"Sure thing," I said, shaking his hand.

I only had to wait a moment before Superman returned without Jimmy.

"I wish you hadn't lied outright to him about the matter of my secret identity," he said.

"I had to spare his feelings," I said. "He's a touchy fellow."

"He's a good kid, Will. He really is. He's just not used to alcohol. I hope this doesn't discourage you from coming to work at the Daily Star."

"To tell you the truth, pal, I don't know if I'd like journalism. There might be too much pressure, with Perry always bellowing for headlines and Lois always jockeying for a big scoop."

"I got used to the tension of being an ace newsman fairly quickly. But then, of course, with my invulnerable body I'm not subject to the migraines and ulcers of ordinary people. I have a reputation among my peers for being mild-mannered."

"In any case, I might have trouble keeping your true identity a secret on a daily basis," I said. "Lois might grow suspicious if I sometimes slip and address you as 'Sup . . . er . . . Ken.'"

"Yes, she is a bit of a snoop," he admitted. He frowned thoughtfully as we walked along the darkened streets of Metropolis, oblivious to the chorus of awed whispers from the ordinary people like you and me who, even here in his home town, followed in his wake.

"Well, we'll talk about your employment situation tomorrow, after I get home from work. Tonight, I've got to write a story on that volcano."

UPCOMING COMICS

Shipping in March

DC COMICS

- ☐ Justice League of America 240
- ☐ Crisis on Infinite Earths 4
- ☐ DC Comics Presents 83
- ☐ Fury of Firestorm 37
- ☐ Best of DC Digest 62
- ☐ Atari Force 19
- ☐ Hawkman Mini-Series 3
- ☐ Tales of the Teen Titans 55
- ☐ Legion of Substitute Heroes Special 1
- ☐ Vigilante 19
- ☐ Deadman 3
- ☐ Red Tornado 1
- ☐ Batman 385
- ☐ The Flash 347
- ☐ Superman 409
- ☐ Star Trek 16
- ☐ Amethyst 7
- ☐ Jemm, Son of Saturn 11
- ☐ Arak, Son of Thunder 46
- ☐ Omega Men 28
- ☐ The Legion of Super-Heroes 12
- ☐ Batman Annual 9
- ☐ Saga of the Swamp Thing 38
- ☐ Batman and the Outsiders 23
- ☐ Green Lantern 190
- ☐ Sgt. Rock 402
- ☐ Warlord 95
- ☐ Blue Devil 14
- ☐ Who's Who 5
- ☐ G.I. Combat 278
- ☐ Infinity, Inc. 16
- ☐ The New Teen Titians 10
- ☐ Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes 325
- ☐ Action 569
- ☐ Detective 552
- ☐ World's Finest 317
- ☐ All-Star Squadron 47
- ☐ Aquaman, Lord of Atlantis 33
- ☐ Ambush Bug Mini-Series 2
- ☐ V 6
- ☐ Sword of the Atom Special 2
- ☐ Wonder Woman 326

MARVEL

- ☐ Cloak and Dagger 2
- ☐ Daredevil 220
- ☐ New Mutants 29
- ☐ The Thing 25
- ☐ Web of Spider-Man 4
- ☐ Dreadstar and Company 1
- ☐ Gargoyle 2
- ☐ Conan the King 29
- ☐ Amazing Spider-Man 266
- ☐ Captain America 307
- ☐ Dazzler 38
- ☐ Indiana Jones 30
- ☐ Micronauts 10
- ☐ Power Pack 12
- ☐ Groo the Wanderer 5
- ☐ Alpha Flight 24
- ☐ Savage Sword of Conan 113
- ☐ Marvel Age 28
- ☐ Avengers 257
- ☐ Conan the Barbarian 172
- ☐ Incredible Hulk 309
- ☐ Marvel Tales 177
- ☐ Moon Knight 2
- ☐ Power Man/Iron Fist 118
- ☐ Rom: Spaceknight 68
- ☐ X-Men 195
- ☐ G.I. Joe 37
- ☐ Marvel Fanfare 21
- ☐ Defenders 145
- ☐ Fantastic Four 280
- ☐ Iron Man 196
- ☐ Peter Parker 104
- ☐ Star Wars 97
- ☐ Thor 357
- ☐ Rocket Raccoon 3
- ☐ Secret Wars II 1
- ☐ Transformers 6
- ☐ Hembeck Destroys the Marvel Universe
- ☐ Spider-Man Index 4
- ☐ Doctor Who 10

EPIC COMICS

- ☐ Moonshadow 2
- ☐ Black Dragon 1
- ☐ Time Spirits 4
- ☐ Coyote 12
- ☐ Swords of the Swashbucklers 2
- ☐ Epic Illustrated 30

STAR COMICS

- ☐ Peter Porker 2
- ☐ Planet Terry 4
- ☐ Ewoks 2
- ☐ Wally the Wizard 4
- ☐ Get Along Gang 2
- ☐ Muppet Babies 2
- ☐ Royal Roy 2

FIRST COMICS

- ☐ Nexus 10
- ☐ The Badger 6
- ☐ Grimjack 12
- ☐ American Flagg 22
- ☐ Starslayer 30
- ☐ Jon Sable 26
- ☐ American Flagg Graphic Novel

ECLIPSE COMICS

- ☐ Zot 10
- ☐ Pressbutton 4
- ☐ Sun-Runners 5
- ☐ DNAgents 21
- ☐ Crossfire 10
- ☐ Aztec Ace 12

AARDVARK—VANAHEIM

- ☐ Black Zeppelin 1
- ☐ Cerebus 71
- ☐ Cerebus Jam Comix
- ☐ Ms. Tree 17

COMICO

- ☐ Elementals 4
- ☐ Next Man 1

FANTAGRAPHICS

- ☐ Dalgoda 5
- ☐ Journey 18

WARP GRAPHICS

- ☐ Myth-Adventures 5
- ☐ Thunderbunny Comics 1
- ☐ Distant Soil 5
- ☐ Unicorn Isle Comics 1

EAGLE COMICS

- ☐ Captain Britain 4
- ☐ Swiftsure 1
- ☐ Judge Dredd 21
- ☐ Judge Dredd 22
- ☐ 2000 A.D. 4
- ☐ 2000 A.D. 5
- ☐ Judge Dredd's Crime File 1

ARCHIE'S

- ☐ Mighty Crusaders 12
- ☐ Betty & Veronica 336
- ☐ Laugh 389
- ☐ TV Laughout 101
- ☐ Betty & Veronica Spectacular 548
- ☐ Jughead 340
- ☐ Archie & Me 151
- ☐ Archie at Riverdale 103
- ☐ Katy Keene 9
- ☐ Archie Digest 72
- ☐ Where Are You Digest 38
- ☐ Betty & Veronica Digest 13
- ☐ Jughead Digest 33

STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

DICK TRACY — THE FLETCHER YEARS
PART ONE

In my first column for **Comics Feature**, I told the Dick Tracy story, emphasizing of course creator Chester Gould's phenomenal contribution to the comics in general and Dick Tracy in particular. I spoke briefly of my own contribution to Tracy, in collaboration with Richard E. Fletcher, Chester Gould's final assistant on the strip. It's time, I think, to talk in more detail about my years on Dick Tracy with Rick Fletcher. This is the first of two columns dealing with the Fletcher Years on Dick Tracy.

Chester Gould

Rick Fletcher

Max Allan Collins

RICK FLETCHER

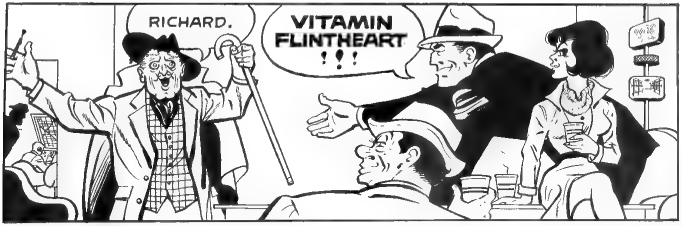
Rick Fletcher died, too young, on March 16, 1983, after making his own considerable contribution to the world of comics, having worked on Dick Tracy for twenty-two years. When he took over the full art chores on the strip, Rick left his mark on Tracy, bringing great flair to the characters (he particularly drew a definitive Tracy profile—crisp and bold) and the attention to detail of a dedicated researcher, made second-nature to him by his years of advertising art, work on the historical strip Old Glory Story, and his painstaking background work for Chester Gould on Tracy. Rick was especially proud of his "hardware" - guns were a particular passion, and Tracy's .357 magnum always had a high-tech, chrome look that gave our strip a sheen.

As his son Ross once said, "He was constantly in contact with police departments so he could make use of realistic police details in portraying police in the comic strip. He knew their rules."

THE FIRST YEAR

The first Dick Tracy story that artist Rick Fletcher and I did was based upon the sample synopsis I had submitted to the Chicago Tribune Syndicate, when editor Don Michel called me in the

Dick Tracy and visuals accompanying this column © 1985 Chicago Tribune



summer of '77, offering me a chance to try out for what had been my favorite comic strip since childhood. I was given the opportunity to try out for Tracy because I was a mystery novelist; but I was a mystery novelist because, back when I was even more impressionable than I am now, Chester Gould drilled me through the brain, just like Tracy shooting a bad guy.

It was Gould and Tracy that opened the door on a world of tough guys (good and bad) and violence and action and emotion and humor, and all the elements that make up a good crime story. I was, of course, thrilled when editor Michel and Syndicate President Bob Reed chose me to be the first writer to follow in Chet Gould's footsteps. Since I had never written comics before, I was thrilled that I would be having Rick Fletcher, a 16-year veteran of the strip, as artist.

I had gone to visit Chet Gould in his Tribune Tower office a few years before, in the company of my friend Matt Masterson, the world's foremost **Tracy** fan, bar none.

Chet and Rick were working on a Sunday page and some dailies. We had lunch together, the four of us, and Rick and I ended up chatting by ourselves several times, while fanatical Matt buttonholed Chet to grill him about this or that. Rick struck me as a very nice man. We exchanged some friendly letters and he sent me an **Old Glory** original.

Since Rick and I were not strangers, we had little trouble getting our collaboration off the ground. We began with several bull sessions on the long-distance phone. In our first year of the strip, we wanted to show that the traditions of Chet Gould's classic strip would be continued, but at the same time indicate a new direction.

What better way to indicate a second generation of **Tracy** than to introduce the second generation of villains: Flattop's daughter Angeltop and The Brow's son? The "Deathtrap" finale (felt by many fans to be Rick Fletcher's finest hour) takes the strip literally back to the climax of the most famous **Tracy** story of all, the replica ship in the lagoon where Flattop drowned in 1944 - but such elements as Angeltop's media appearances, decrying the death's of her father and brother as the result of police brutality, were meant to show the strip was connected to the 70s, not just the 40s.

It had been my hope, for the second story, to do a completely original villain; a synopsis I did about a villain called Normal (loosely based on Son of Sam) was shelved by the Syndicate because it was deemed too controversial (it resurfaced, finally, in late 1984). I was asked to do a classic Gould villain instead, and rather than return to the 40s, I chose to do what I consider the best of the later Gould baddies, Haf-and-Haf (1966); this was a story Rick Fletcher had worked on, and he seconded the notion of bringing Haf-and-Haf back.

Again, the modern touch is present in

the story: a rehabilitation program seeks to use plastic surgery to help "ugly" felons reform. I invented this one out of whole cloth, but a reader sent us a clipping about an actual program almost identical to the one I did in the strip - which was intended as a satire.

BACK TO SQUARE ONE

Chet Gould killed off most of the villains in **Dick Tracy** - even superstars like Flattop and Pruneface (though the latter, frozen to death by Chet, was thawed out by Dick Locher and me in 1983). But the very first **Tracy** story, about the Capone-like Big Boy, kind of trailed off. It occured to me that it would be fun, in the first year of Fletcher/Collins **Tracy**, to complete Chet's first story; it would really signal a new beginning for **Tracy**. In "The Million Dollar Open Contract," Big Boy provides a framework for two stories introducing several new villains, one of whom - The Iceman, an effective Fletcher design - is a favorite of mine.

It was also my intention, in the first year, to bring back characters that Chet had dropped but that I found to be worthwhile (Vitamin Flintheart, primarily - he hadn't been in the strip since 1950); and to rid the strip of characters that I felt were excess baggage - Vera Alldid divorces Sparkle (offstage) and Junior's wife Moon Maid is blown up in a car (onstage). Suffice to say, it was the first (but not the last) time the Fletcher-Collins continuation hit the wire services with a news story; and it signalled the end of the Moon Era, which to some had been a period of **Tracy** in its decline.

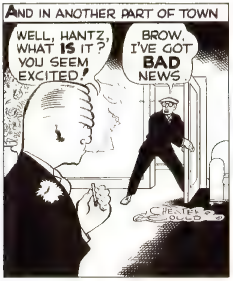
I never completely shared this view of the Moon stories - they are typically the product of Gould's bizarre imagination, and this period - significantly, when Rick Fletcher was assisting, helping Chet develop that glossy, black, high-tech style of the 60s and 70s **Tracy** - is coming to be viewed as a visual high point in the strip's history.

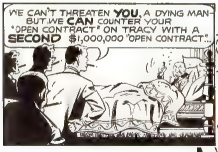
Still, both Rick and I felt it important to get that period of the strip behind us; to get Dick Tracy, once and for all, out of a magnetic flying moon bucket and back in a squad car, where he belongs.

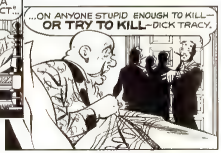
GETTING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THINGS

One of the first things Rick Fletcher and I discovered about each other, when the Chicago Tribune Syndicate brought us together to continue Chester Gould's classic strip, was our mutual admiration for Will Eisner. In **The Spirit**, Eisner told literate, perfectly structured little crime fables; and he drew expressively, moodily, turning out what might be best described as Film Noir comics.

As much as I admired Chet Gould's **Tracy**, there was one aspect of his approach that I could not, and did not, wish to imitate: Chet never figured a story out in advance; he flew by the seat of his pants, saying "If I don't know what's going to happen next, the reader won't." There is a lot to be said for this approach; but I wanted to tell well-shaped, Eisner-style stories - with a beginning, middle and end (though the end is often disguised a bit, as comic strip continuities need to be blended







It's no easy job trying to kill Dick Tracy, as Big Boy learned.

into one another, if for no other reason than to avoid giving editors an easy place to drop a strip).

Also, Don Michel, then-editor of the Tribune Syndicate, wanted to keep an eye on the property and asked that I send him a synopsis of each story in advance. There are many reasons for this practice, not the least of which is it was handy for Rick Fletcher to have the synopsis ahead of actual production so that the necessary thought and care could be put into the development of the look of the story's villain - a key factor in **Tracy**. It also gave Rick (just as it gives current artist Dick Locher, one-time Gould assistant and award-winning political cartoonist) an opportunity to make comments and suggestions on the shape the story would take.

"The Computer Killer" was an Eisner-style story, pure and simple (so, to a degree, was the Angeltop story in the first year): a little guy who feels crushed by the System goes up against it by "killing" computers with a shotgun. Later, a computer "kills" (electrocutes) him. "The Computer Killer" was also part of the continuing effort to give the strip a current flavor, to keep Tracy involved with modern crime.

OLD AND NEW VILLAINS

Next, the folks at the Syndicate suggested we do another classic villain, so I decided to meet a big problem head-on: as previously noted, Chester Gould killed most of his best villains off. So I picked a real superstar, Mumbles (even Gould couldn't resist using him twice, bringing him back to life in '55 after a '47 apparent drowning) - and tried to remain true to the original continuity in figuring out a way to "bring him back alive"; of course, Dr. Zy Ghote - the secondary villain created for this story to make sure the villainy of the piece wasn't completely drawn from Gould - claimed this youthful Mumbles was a clone (Tracy proved the "cloning" to be a scam, and the "clone" to be the real, live Mumbles).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 61

MUTANTS IN THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

THE MUTANT OFFICE

Next I talked to Ann Nocenti, the young lady who edits both **X-Men** and **The New Mutants** and sprinkles those informative footnotes through the pages of both magazines. "They consider my office the mutant office," she said by way of introduction.

Asked for a general comment on what the future has in store for the Marvel mutants, she answered, "Basically it's going to start getting worse and worse. You're going to have a lot of resentment, hate and fear."

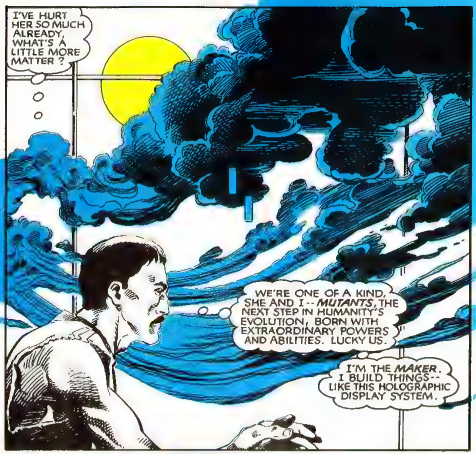
Before getting into specifics, I asked for some information on how the mutant office worked.

"Chris and I work very closely," Miss Nocenti answered, "go out and have plot sessions and throw ideas around. Chris is very much a character person. You have somebody like Archie Goodwin, he's an incredible plot mechanic and he'll write flawless plots. Chris' strong point is characterization. He and I consider these living, breathing characters. The way we talk about them—it's like they were our children or something."

I was curious as to whether she read much science fiction, and if she brought any notions picked up there into the plot sessions.

"No, not any at all. I've read some mythological literature, but not really any science fiction. I have no knowledge of science fiction stories or even of Marvel's history. So basically, when we're working on a plot, I work from the realm of my imagination." She does relate to the area of psionics. "Mostly because I've gone through phases of reading about that sort of thing, extrasensory stuff."

Moving toward the topic of what's upcoming for the Marvel mutants, Miss



Nocenti told me, "We're setting up stories where, say, the X-Men'll go to save the world and they're going to end up just looking like outlaws. And we'd developing a parallel thing, basically in Russia—we're starting to touch on Russia a little bit. And what you'll have happening is our government saying, 'You guys are outlaws. You guys are criminals.' What are you going to do? You have these mutants out there and you can consider them like nuclear weapons. You either want to control them—use them as part of your arsenal—or you'll outlaw them. Tell them, 'Get out of the country!' Now,

Illyanna — the witch and her magic sword.

what's Russia going to do but say, 'You can come over here. Live in our country and we'll take care of you.' "

Did that mean we might see Russian X-Men eventually?

"Well, that's a possibility. The United States is reacting out of fear. They can't, you know, let these creatures live."

What else can we be on the lookout for?

"Well, we've also got Nimrod. Coming from the future to the past. He's programmed to protect humanity by exterminating mutants. And there's going to be a trial of Magneto before the World Court. That'll be issue two hundred of **X-Men** and that'll bring out into the open a lot of things. We're already planned way beyond 200. We have a lot of storylines."

Two savage X-Men — a wolf and a Wolverine

NEW ARTIST
NEWER MUTANTS

Recalling my recent encounter with Bill Sienkiewicz, I asked about his relationship with the New Mutants.

"He's taking a leave of absence to work on a graphic novel. We have this trilogy about a character called Bat Karma coming up and Steve Leialoha will be doing that. Then Mary Wilshire's taking over after that and we'll see if Bill's coming back." As to Sienkiewicz' tenure on the book, "He's fabulous. He took the **New Mutants**, which to me was a book I couldn't even get into when I first started reading it. It was just a bunch of kids, all too similar. And he just visually got at the psychology of them and evolved them to a point where they're wonderful characters. And the sales went up with Bill."

Does she worry that changes in artists and writers might hurt a title?

"No, not at all. For instance, just last night we went out with Barry Windsor-Smith to talk about another **X-Men** he's going to do for us. And by the way, there's no fight scene, no battle, none of that stuff." Doesn't that go against the Marvel tradition? "I'm thinking more lately in terms of psychology, in terms of drama. I no longer worry about battles and fights. But I also have to remember about the common denominator and keep in mind what our readers want. What we're turning out, basically, is entertainment."

I also wanted to know if there'd be new mutants coming along.

"There's a group called The Misfits that I'm working on with Jo Duffy. We

Ann Nocenti, mans the command booth as editor of the mutant books

don't have an artist yet. It's going to be launched as a limited series and probably turn into a regular series. It's about people who are too cowardly or too ridiculous or too selfish...because it's always bothered me that you get superpowers and you all of a sudden get heroic. So this'll deal more realistically with what happens when you get superpowers. Some of the characters will have costumes. It's still in the planning stages, but will be out in '85."

A REAL SPORTS FREAK

Next I turned to Chris Claremont. I've been acquainted with him for several years, having encountered him at various Science Fiction Writers of America doings and at numerous comic conventions. I still fondly recall a mismatched panel discussion we shared in Boston some years back with Joe Simon, Howie Chaykin and L.B. Cole.

I asked him what was going to be happening in the mutant saga. "It's going to move into the realm of geopolitics," he answered. "Mutants aren't just an object of prejudice anymore, they've become commodities in both a commercial and a political sense. Corporations want mutants...if you're heavily into industrial espionage you want a telepath and so on. That's the Hellfire Club side of things. They utilize mutants as an exploitable resource — same as oil or gas or a scientist. In terms of how the government works, it's the same sort of thing. Mutants are another potentially dangerous weapon and potentially destabilizing. So we've got a whole riff going on between the Soviets and the Americans, each of them jockeying for position and trying to determine if they've got a Mutant Gap."

But what about those in government who think the only good mutant is a dead mutant?

"That's one of the things that's being debated. What we've got coming up in 200 is the trial of Magneto, wherein he

The newest New Mutant and the newest X Man

goes on trial for his various crimes against humanity. One of the subtexts of the story is that the permanent government people in both the US and the USSR are kind of putting their heads together and trying to figure out what to do about mutants. Do we live with them? Do we give them their own space in the world, take all the mutants and plant them somewhere ala Israel? Or do we wipe them out? Because it's an either/or proposition. The great powers are eventually going to decide what to do and impose their will on everyone else. Another thing the trial'll do is allow for an airing of all the different views. And I'm going to see if it's maybe legally possible to prove Magneto's innocent."

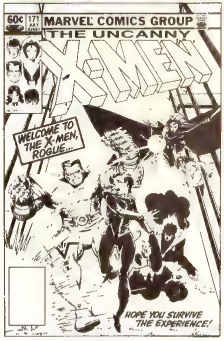
And what about Nimrod?

"His programming is to safeguard humanity and that's by destroying mutants. He's the random element in the deck."

I was curious as to how he kept track of all the mutants he deals with in **X-Men** and **New Mutants**. "I've got notes on paper, I've got notes in my computer and I've got a lot of stuff in my head. Basically I have a rough general idea of where we're going, but a lot of it is subject to evolution and mutation along the way. For instance, the story we just plotted with Barry Smith has gone in an entirely different direction than I had intended. That'll be in 198, a one issue fill-in he's doing." There's also a possibility Berni Wrightson will do a future X-Man episode.

AH, SUCCESS

Besides his own contribution, what does Claremont think accounts for the current success of his X-Men book? "I think when the X-Men were restarted in '75, we were the first new group book to come along in quite awhile. There seems to be, then and now, a hungering...group books seem more inevitably popular than single character books. Possibly because of the character interaction and the fact there're more people to identify with. As to why it remains successful—we've got a core group of



Rogue — the newest X-Man — goes into action.

strong, defined yet ambiguous characters. The rule of the book is to grab the readers emotionally and drag them, kicking and screaming, along."

This growing success also means that there'll be, up the road, more X-Men spinoffs. Books Claremont won't have time to handle. "What you have is two conflicting desires," he observes. "There's the company desire to exploit a saleable property to the hilt and earn money. There's my fear, as a creator, that I don't want to devalue the coinage."

There are times, too, when Claremont wishes he had more space per issue, more pages to play with. "The problem is we're trying to cram thirty pages of story into twenty-two pages of art. And if there were forty pages I'd probably end up cramming fifty pages into forty. The characters are such that we could get away with any length. There are so many characters and there are so many layers to them that it's basically shoehorning to fit them all in. If I were doing it in purely prose format, I'd be able to get into them a lot more than I can on a comic book page."

Does that mean he'd like to do an X-Men prose novel? "I'd love to do it."

Before taking my leave, I asked how far ahead he had the X-Men saga planned. "I know what's going to happen through the summer," Claremont said. "After that things get ambiguous because we have to allow for **Secret Wars II**. Since we don't know what Jim Shooter's going to do with **Secret Wars**, we don't know how it's going to effect the X-Men. It's like **Waiting for Godot** sort of."

There'll be some changes made in the Defenders camp, too. New members will be showing up, as well as guest stars ranging from Sub-Mariner to Patsy Walker. Author Peter Gillis has also promised a new super group. Known as the Galaxy Dancers, they'll add "a note of lyricism" to the book. At the **New Mutants** we can expect kidnappings, a duel between the Impossible Man and Warlock and, of course, all the mutants will have to cope with the repercussions of the decisions reached at the World Court in **X-Men** 200.

Having spent several days with the Marvel mutants, and a couple of hours with some of their mentors and creators, I find myself wondering about how things are going to turn out. Soon as I finish this report I'm going to call my local comic shop and tell them to reserve a copy of 200 for me.

GAMES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

more consistency with past Marvel history than we have seen so far.

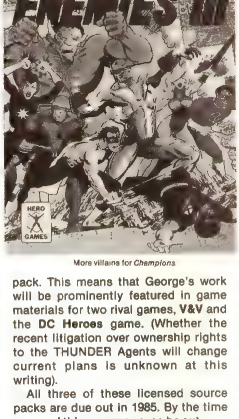
ALTERNATE SOURCES

Followers of the comic books of smaller publishers such as Comico's **Elementals**, Deluxe's **THUNDER Agents** and Eclipse's **DNAgents** will get a somewhat better deal for gaming information—as long as they play Fantasy Games Unlimited's **Villains and Vigilantes**. FGU's Scott Bizar has managed to secure the rights to put out source packs for each of these organizations, with all the heroes and most of the prominent villains described in **V&V** terms.

That Bill Willingham should bring his Elementals to FGU is hardly surprising, Bill is a longtime **V&V** player and wrote the first two scenarios issued under the new edition of **V&V**. In fact, readers of **The Elementals** can get something of a preview of the Elementals storyline by picking up "Death Duel with the Destroyers" and "The Island of Doctor Apocalypse" from FGU. (I must say that the villains described in the first of these scenarios did not seem anywhere near as fragile as their namesakes, whom Willingham is casually killing off in his comic book.) Of course, Bill will do all the artwork for the source pack based on his creations.

In my previous column, it was erroneously reported that the arrangement for FGU to publish a **DNAgents** source pack was primarily the brainchild of Will Meugniot. Co-creator Mark Evanier informs me that he was consulted on the project "every step of the way," and has already written an introduction to the game supplement. I was also operating under the misapprehension that Eclipse had some control over licensing of **DNAgents**. Dean Mullaney of Eclipse has since explained the true situation. I'm sorry if I gave the impression that Eclipse was being cheated out of control that they did not, in fact, have.

The coup of obtaining THUNDER Agents is a real feather in FGU's cap since the current plan is for George Perez to handle the art chores on the



More villains for *Champions*

pack. This means that George's work will be prominently featured in game materials for two rival games, **V&V** and the **DC Heroes** game. (Whether the recent litigation over ownership rights to the THUNDER Agents will change current plans is unknown at this writing).

All three of these licensed source packs are due out in 1985. By the time you read this, one may even be out.

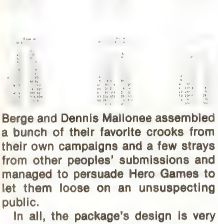
As a small plug, **Champions** and **Superworld** players should note that the **Superworld Companion** from Chaosium has systems for converting **V&V** statistics to **Superworld**, and **Superworld** statistics to **Champions**. A bit of homework using these systems and you would have **Superworld** and **Champions** versions of all of the groups listed above.

SPEAKING OF CHAMPIONS

Meanwhile, the good folk at Hero Games have finally issued a new compilation of badguys to keep their fans happy. Since it is the third such collection they have issued, it is reasonably titled **Enemies III**.

This is the first collection of supercrooks put together entirely by outsiders. Longtime **Champions** aficianadoes Andy Robinson, Dave

EXPERIENCE LEVELS

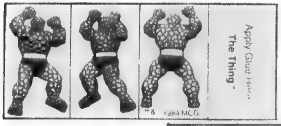


Berge and Dennis Mallonee assembled a bunch of their favorite crooks from their own campaigns and a few strays from other peoples' submissions and managed to persuade Hero Games to let them loose on an unsuspecting public.

In all, the package's design is very good. Each villain gets a page to him or her self and all get much longer and more detailed descriptions of their methods and motivations. In most cases, the costumes and equipment of the topic of discussion are described in detail, making figure painters such as myself much happier than we have been with trying to figure out the colors of superfoes' costumes from the meager hints given by various shades of zipatone on the black-and-white pictures provided in previous volumes.

The artwork on the volume is by Mike Witherby, who replaces long-time Hero Games stalwart Mark Williams. Mike's style is sketchier than Mark's, but has a dynamism that Williams' static figures could never capture. The illustrations are also more than simple portrait shots. They depict the villains in action against appropriate backgrounds.

The biggest problem with the book is that several villains are described by the editors' usual campaign methods. This description mode varies from the usual one used by Hero Games and is confusing because of it. The editors also interpret some rules differently than they have been interpreted in previous Hero Games publications. This tells me that the Hero Games



Pretend you are your favorite hero!

Playing characters for the new *Marvel Superheroes* roleplaying game.

editorial assistants, Steve Peterson and Bruce Harlick, did not do their homework properly.

But these are minor cavils that no true **Champions** fanatic will be bothered by. In all, it is an interesting book, with several good villains of differing difficulty levels for any **Champions** campaign.

As of this writing, December 29, 1984, **Adventurers Club Magazine** 5 is supposed to be out, thus bringing the book back on schedule. I don't have it yet. So much for that.

GOLDEN HEROES

The newest challenger in the superhero game field is **Golden Heroes** by Simon Burley and Pete Haines. It comes from Games Workshop in England and includes a two-inch wide box, a 56 page "Players Handbook", an 84 page "Supervisor's Handbook", and five excellent dice for a very competitive $13.00. The price alone will make it a serious competitor to **Champions** and **Villains and Vigilantes** for the new gamer's money.

However, the game has more than the price going for it. It is the most profusely illustrated game of its type I have ever seen. The artwork is by a veritable Who's Who of British comics artists, including Brian Bolland, Alan Craddock, Mike Collins and Brendan McCarthy. Moreover, it is very readable and understandable, which is more than I can say for its most recent competition: Palladium's **Heroes Unlimited** and Mayfair's **DC Heroes**. The game also provides the best campaign rules I have seen in any superhero game. The character advancement system plays directly into the campaign rules, and the characters must interact with the gamemaster's (here called a Scenario Supervisor, or SS) campaign to improve themselves.

Veteran **Champions**, **Supergame** or **Superworld** players might object to the game's random selection of superpowers, but the system for selecting powers is simple and tends to give the player plenty of options. There is even an option for choosing powers under the steely eye of the SS (which is a little frightening, isn't it?). I attempted to put together Captain Liberty—a hero I originally designed in the '60s as a fan fiction hero and have used both in **Champions** and **Superworld**—using the **Golden Heroes** rules and he worked out perfectly.

However, further attempts to write up other characters showed some gaps in the powers descriptions as presented. How do you do darkness? My Dr. Mid-Nite ripoff character, like his inspiration, throws blackout bombs. There is no way to simulate a darkness bomb or even a simple smoke bomb.

Unlike most of the other superhero games, **Golden Heroes** does not limit characters by making them pay some sort of energy points for using their powers. Lamentably, this seems to have forestalled any way of simulating the energy absorption and reuse powers of a character like Sebastian Shaw, the Black King of the Hellfire Club. There are other gaps between what the game provides and the powers shown in the comics, which is a failing in any superhero game.

The combat system also has a glitch which seems caused by a definite creative sloppiness. According to the Strike Table (See figure 1), Defence (sic) Classes 1-5 all have exactly the same chance of being hit by each Weapon Class. These Defence Classes are all carefully explained in the Defence Class Table (see figure 2), and each describes a different form of armor. Each of the other Defence Classes from 6 to 12 have differing chances of being hit by each Weapon Class. However, Classes 7-10 are casually lumped together in the Defence Class descriptions, as are 11 and 12. Nowhere else in the rules are the differences between these Defence Classes explained. If the differences between the classes are unimportant, why do the different levels even exist? And why is there a difference between the chance of hitting Defence Class 7 and Defence Class 8 when there is no explanation of what makes them different? I fear that I am not impressed by this obvious editorial blindness to inadequacies in the basic game system. Perhaps Simon and Peter weren't talking to each other when this material was written? If so, Editor Albie Fiore should have caught the problem and rectified it.

The rules also leave quite a bit to the determination of the SS rather than giving definite guidelines. This is fine for a veteran player, but **Golden Heroes** is supposed to be shooting for the new player. Good luck, new player.

But, in all, I have to say that this is still a very playable and enjoyable game. It has many interesting features and is worth playing, particularly for the excellent campaign development rules. I give it a "B".

A sampling of Fletcher *Dick Tracy* panels.

MEDIA SPLASH

With computers and cloning establishing trendy subject matter as a constant in the "new" **Dick Tracy**, I next reached for something that reflected one of my own interests - rock 'n' roll music - and used punk rock as the topical hook for the next story. For a setting, we used a real locale (something Chet had done only rarely), Washington state, which gave Rick a chance to utilize his more realistic, illustrative bent in depicting the settings, many of which involved Indians, a Fletcher specialty.

In a continuing effort to humanize Tracy and make him more a character and less a symbol, he and Tess experience a blessed event in the backwoods; I expected that to attract some media attention, but not much happened . . . whereas the punk aspect of the story got the strip talked about in **Circus** magazine and all kinds of rock columns, some of them nationally syndicated.

Rick was even approached by the rock group Cheap Trick for an original of a Sunday in which they were pictured in a poster on a wall in the background. He signed it to them, sent it along and got free backstage passes for his son Ross.

When Tracy's plane was skyjacked on his way home from Washington state, that's when the media really hit the fan: a week or so after the comic-strip skyjacking, a real-life skyjacking apparently patterned on ours hit the headlines. We got some criticism for "teaching crime" in the strip (we were, of course, doing the opposite); but secretly, I was delighted to have the publicity.

And knew my instinct was right when Chet Gould called to congratulate us on the incident!

NEXT ISSUE: DICK TRACY, THE FLETCHER YEARS, Part Two

© 1985, Max Allan Collins

SILVER AGE

MARVEL SUPERTEAMS

BY JACOBS & JONES

Marvel's innovations did not cease with their offbeat new heroes. As Stan Lee's creations proliferated he began weaving them together with an internal consistency such as no company had ever tried to maintain before. As Mort Weisinger had given Superman a consistent universe that linked seven titles, Lee would now tie together the diverse heroes and subplots of his entire company into a unity that would change the face of comics. He left no doubt that all his heroes really coexisted in the same world, that the Golden Age heroes had existed in that very world a couple of decades before, and that that world included all the real places and social realities that ours does. Within this "Marvel Universe" Lee began redefining the way heroes relate to one another, flying impudently in the face of the DC tradition of camaraderie and chumminess.

Guest appearances of one hero in another's story were old hat, but no one had done them with the frequency or casualness which Marvel began employing in 1963. Heroes, in Marvel comics, would not just get together for periodic teamup issues as Flash and Green Lantern did twice a year; they would drop in on each other for a brief assist on a case, bump into each other on the rooftops, and call each other for help, sometimes to be rebuffed. But most of all they fought. Nearly every time Marvel heroes met, with the exception of numerous cameo appearances, some twist of the plot forced them into combat. In the first two Marvel teamups, a cocky Spider-Man fights the Fantastic Four to prove his worth (**Spiderman 1**, Mar. 1963) and the FF are used by the military to wrestle the Hulk into submission (**Fantastic Four 12**, Mar. 1963). Sometimes the battles were brought about by the mind control of some villain, as when the Ringmaster hypnotized Spider-Man into attacking Daredevil(**SM 16**, Sept. 1964). Other times, Lee had to arrange some misunderstanding, as when the villainous Chameleon fooled Iron Man into believing Captain America was a phony, and Cap obligingly waited until five pages of fight scenes had passed before setting the record straight (**Tales of Suspense 58**, Nov. 1964).

Whether the heroes were fighting, joining forces, or merely catching one another up on the latest gossip, these crossovers appeared to be among Marvel's most popular features. Soon Lee decided to create a regular forum for such teamups with **The Avengers**, Marvel's answer to DC's Justice League of America. In it, Thor, Iron Man, Ant-Man and the Wasp joined forces to battle cataclysmic threats that were too much for one hero, particularly supervillain teams like Baron Zemo's Masters of Evil, a league of old enemies of the various Avengers.

The Avengers were a small team, but an effective mix. The two Lee-Ditko characters, Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, who drew much of their appeal from being loners and odd-balls,

Avengers, X-Men and *Fantastic Four* and all visuals accompanying this column © 1985 Marvel Comics Group

Early in Avengers history the FF made a cameo appearance.

were wisely left out. The group shifted a little, first when Ant-Man became Giant Man, then when Captain America was thawed out (in the now-famous fourth issue), making it more varied and powerful. The Avengers lacked the variety of specialized powers possessed by the Justice League, but with Thor and Iron Man's might, Giant Man's size and Cap's gymnastic ability there was plenty of opportunity for hard-hitting action; where the JLA was perfect for a Gardner Fox plot, the Avengers were ideal for a Jack Kirby slugfest. They did not, however, give Stan Lee much room for his emotional developments. Except for the Hulk, who bounded occasionally onto the scene, these heroes were all a pretty chummy group. The team would only work well as long as Kirby drew it, and he decided not to stay long. With the ninth issue Don Heck took over the pencilling chores, and although he was a competent renderer of human emotion, he didn't command enough punch to make the highpowered action effective. To keep the Avengers entertaining, a change would have to be made, a change which Lee was soon prepared to make.

Simultaneously with the first issue of the Avengers came another team, the X-Men. Another Lee-Kirby project, they were labelled "The Strangest Super-Heroes of All," and all shared a common affliction: they were mutants, young people born with weird powers because of abnormalities in their parents' genes. Scott Summers, known as Cyclops, fired beams of destructive energy uncontrollably from his eyes; Warren Worthington III, the Angel, had huge wings sprouting from his back which enabled him to fly; Hank McCoy, the Intellectual Beast, possessed massive legs and feet and an ape-like posture which gave him phenomenal agility; Bobby Drake, the Iceman, was able to freeze himself and form icy weapons from his fingers; and pretty Jean Grey, Marvel Girl, was able to move objects telekinetically. All five teenagers were scorned by their peers and feared by society until brought together by a genius in a wheelchair, Professor Charles Xavier, to learn to control their powers and use them constructively.

Xavier, known as Professor X, is himself a mutant with awesome powers of telepathy. He has a deep interest in mutantkind, calling them "Homo Superior," the next step in human evolution. He believes that for the present, however, mutants must learn to live in harmony with Homo Sapiens, even keeping watch over them, and resist the temptation to take advantage of their powers. Other mutants, unfortunately, do not share his altruism; chief among these is Magneto, master of magnetism, who believes that the destiny of Homo Superior is to rule. When he attacks American military installations, Xavier sends his young charges, costumed and masked, out to defeat him, and the X-Men ("X" for the "extra" factor in their make-ups) become a superhero team.

Their origin makes clear two paradoxical points: This was, on the one hand, another unprecedented Marvel innovation and yet, on the other, the idea was strangely similar to that of DC's Doom Patrol. "The World's Strangest Heroes" and "The Strangest Super-Heroes of All" were in both cases a team of freaks and outcasts brought together to be trained and given new lives by a wheelchair-ridden genius. The fact that the X-Men appeared less than three months after the DP makes plagiarism unlikely, given the usual production schedules of comics, and yet the parallels are remarkable. And they continued after the origin story: When Magneto gathered a crew of fellow mutants to attack mankind again, they were christened the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, a name oddly similar to the

Iron Man confuses the real Captain America with a costumed Champion in an early issue of *Tales of Suspense*

DP's Brotherhood of Evil, who reached the stands that same month.

The mutant theme dominated the X-Men's adventures. Often Professor X would contact a newly-discovered mutant, hoping to add him to his group, only to have him yield to selfishness or bitterness and battle the X-Men. Among these were the Blob, an enormous fellow whom no power could move, Unus the Untouchable, with his all-repelling force field and the Mimic, a troubled, arrogant youngster with the ability to copy any other mutant's power. The enemies of Homo Superior also figured, as when scientist Bolivar Trask develops an army of unstoppable robots called the Sentinels to find and destroy all mutants, whom he considers a threat to mankind's future."

From the beginning, the greatest appeal of **The X-Men** lay in the large and dynamic cast of characters. The rivalry of silent, brooding Cyclops and the rich Angel for Marvel Girl gave us some of Lee's sloppiest, liveliest and baroque vocabulary ("Your powers of deduction," he tells Iceman, "are exceeded only by your affection for the obvious!") contrasting with his brutish appearance and purely muscular superpower, was one of comics' most delightful surprises of characterization. Even the villains were fleshed out with unusual flair. Particularly intriguing were Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, a superfast European mutant and his quasi-magical sister, who were basically good eggs, but had been manipulated into warring against humanity by the scheming Magneto. The master of magnetism himself had a certain dignity in the zealous purity of his mission and his lordly bearing. Perhaps it was because of this colorful cast that the series remained vital even after Kirby left, being replaced by the unattractive art of Werner Roth, at first calling himself Jay Gavin.

On the minus side, the X-Men rarely exploited the element that made them unique, their alienation. That they were feared and often hounded by mankind should have given an utterly unique, fresh cast to the telling of their stories. And yet, with the exception of the Sentinels, this aspect was rarely played up, and the X-Men often behaved like just another band of costumed crimefighters.

Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch won the affection of enough fans that Lee decided to make heroes of them. This was accomplished with the revamping of the Avengers, where the old heroes were apparently not helping him realize his aims for characterization. All the members but Captain America resigned, and in their place came the two formerly evil mutants, along with an old Iron Man foe who had also proved to have his heart in the right place, a Green Arrow-style archer called Hawkeye.

The main thrust of the "New Avengers" was character interaction. Hawkeye was an abrasive show-off with a chip on his shoulder, Quicksilver a proud, humorless outsider, overly distrustful of mankind and protective of his sister. The Scarlet Witch was a naive, nervous soul, and Captain America the weary, rugged veteran of more battles than the rest of them combined. They were forced to fight as a team to prove their worth to a doubting world, but not for one minute did they get along.

In one incident, Captain America orders Hawkeye to refrain from attempting a home-made repair on a piece of specialized machinery. "Knock it off!" Hawkeye says. "Anybody can fix a crummy fuse!" "Look, hot-shot," replies Cap, "You've been riding me ever since you joined us! I chalked it up to your swelled head and big mouth and let it pass! But now..." Hawkeye promptly raises his bow and arrow, threatening to "change that parting in

your hair," but Quicksilver arrives with a restraining hand. Cap simmers down, but Hawkeye turns his insults on Quicksilver, prompting the Scarlet Witch to blast him off his feet with her "Hex power." "I told you to curb those hex bolts of yours!" says Cap, gently but firmly. "You might have injured Hawkeye!" Whereupon Quicksilver barks, "Have a care how you speak to my sister!" And round and round it goes (**Avengers** 21, Oct. 1965).

Although this discord was at first very appropriate for a team of insecure, over-ambitious misfits, it continued with very little development until it became grating. Something of a new dimension was added when Giant Man, now called Goliath, joined the team and found himself trapped at a freakish ten-foot height, and Don Heck contributed his most active, varied art to the series; but Heck's limitations, an uninspired run of villains, and repetitive characterization prevented **The Avengers** from fulfilling its obvious potential. It would be ripe for change when Roy Thomas took the reins later in 1966.

Although superheroes were the source of all Marvel's success in those years, Lee and Kirby made a foray into war comics by creating **Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos**, in which tough, cigar-chomping Nick Fury led an ethnically mixed pack of fanatical super-soldiers on daring raids into German territory during World War II. Billed as "The War Mag for People Who Hate War Mags," this Kirbyesque romp through the battlefields read sometimes like an offbeat superhero series and sometimes like an unintentional parody of bad war movies. The action scenes were fun, but Kirby soon left that series too, and replacement Dick Ayers was unable to disguise the weakness of the stories.

Lee liked the gruff Nick Fury character, however, and two years later he and Kirby launched **Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.** to replace the Human Torch in **Strange Tales**. Set in the present, this spy series featured a middle-aged Fury as head of a super-scientific espionage organization reminiscent of TV's UNCLE, battling a mysterious fascist enclave called Hydra. Breaking away from his earlier communist themes, Lee was able to use a great deal of imagination in devising secret oaths, hideouts and tactics for both his heroes and villains. He and Kirby invented a whole arsenal of such devices as a flying sports car, ESP-amplifying machines, and an airborne "Heli-Carrier" headquarters. But S.H.I.E.L.D., as inventive as it was, was one series which would increase in significance after Kirby departed.

Throughout this proliferation of groups, Marvel's original team, the Fantastic Four, remained at the forefront of innovation and characterization. The foursome proved to be particularly flexible characters, growing together as distinct but devoted members of a family. Sue Storm's ambivalent feelings for the Sub-Mariner finally settled down after his reunion with his people removed her principal reason to pity him, and at last she told him that it was Reed with whom she wanted to spend her life. Shortly after, Reed stepped out of his rigidly cerebral role long enough to ask her to marry

him. Ben Grimm remained the emotional locus of the series, but now he added a gruff sense of humor to balance his misery, with an appealing Brooklynesque speech pattern that included wisecracks about his old haunt on Yancy Street, oaths sworn on a mysterious Aunt Petunia, and William Bendix's old catchphrase, "Wotta revoltin' development this is!" His running hostility with the Torch evolved into an affectionate needling, and their wild, destructive battles inside FF headquarters provided a humorous counterpoint to the usual fights between Marvel heroes. Reed Richards slowly grew into a harried father-figure as a consequence, loving but losing patience with his impetuous cohorts.

As Lee and Kirby found their footing, the quality of plot and art improved. The most marked improvement was the growth of Dr. Doom, an evil scientist in metal armor who had rivalled the Sub-Mariner as the team's arch-villain since the fifth issue. Gradually he became far more than just another mad scientist, as we discovered his Gypsy origins, found the source of his evil in the wrongs suffered by his family in Europe, and saw him become the autocratic monarch of the Balkan nation of Latveria. In the Fantastic Four's finest hour to that time, they were forced to defeat Doom without their powers in an impressive, two-issue, all-out battle story that helped set the tone for a new phase in Marvel comics (**Fantastic Four 39-40**, June-July 1965).

The early days of Marvel were consummated and brought to a close by the Fantastic Four's third giant-sized annual, featuring the wedding of Reed and Sue. This was the guest-star phenomenon taken to its extreme, "the world's most colossal collection of costumed characters, crazily cavorting and capering in continual combat," a rict of twenty-one heroes leaping, flying and swinging at twenty-one villains and their hordes of acolytes, thugs and deadly beasts. It wasn't much for plot, but twenty-five cents for forty-two colorful super-characters was the best buy of the year for hero-hungry kids.

The comic scene had changed absolutely since that summer nine years before when **Showcase** number four first reached the stands. In the summer of 1965 a trip to the newsstand would reveal Schwartz's stable of revived stalwarts, Weisinger's gigantic supporting cast and the myriad oddities of Schiff, Kashdan and Boltinoff. Now it would also reveal the Marvel explosion of Innovative heroes, the ventures of Charlton, Dell, Harvey and other old companies in the field, and a new company, Tower, with a stable of superspies and crimefighters all its own. This was a cornucopia of costumed crusaders. By the beginning of 1966, superhero comics were heading for the pinnacle of their popularity.

COMICS FEATURE

Comic books, animation, newspaper strips, superhero role-playing games - Like no other magazine, COMICS FEATURE covers it all. Written exclusively by professionals, printed on the best paper and loaded with full, vibrant color, COMICS FEATURE is truly unique. COMICS FEATURE is the only magazine that's universally trusted by the creators, publishers and producers of comic and animation art to accurately and fairly report on their activities.

See why we are truly one of a kind. Subscribe now, for this spectacular offer only, at the special rate of 9 issues for $17.95

Please send me 9 Issues of **Comics Feature** for the low subscription price of $17.95.

NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____
STATE_____
ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY

NMP
NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

COMICS FEATURE
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

FORREST J ACKERMAN'S MONSTER LAND

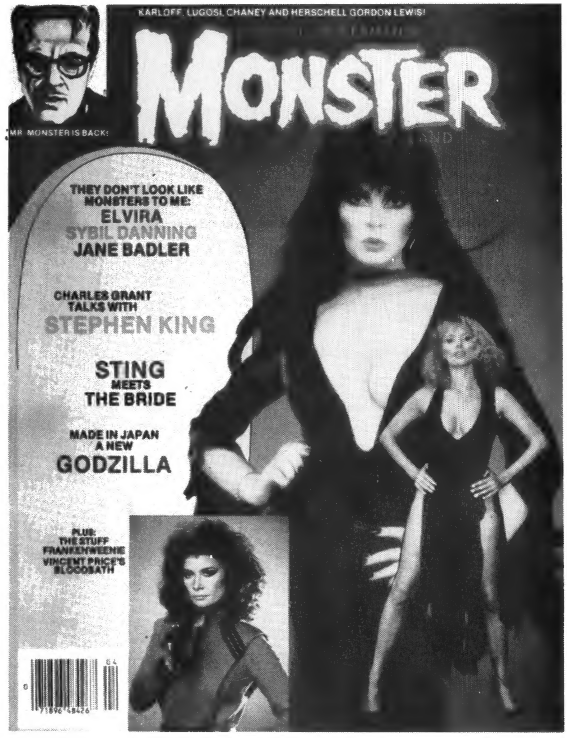
There is only one Mr. Monster. FORREST J. ACKERMAN is the world's greatest living (?) authority on horror, science fiction and monster movies, and New Media's got him.

For 25 years the editor of the first fantasy film mag, FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND, the Ackermonster now offers a new feast of fear: FORREST J. ACKERMAN'S MONSTERLAND! FORREST J. ACKERMAN'S MONSTERLAND is the only frightful filmzine produced exclusively in the tell-tale heart of the nation's movie capital, Horrorwood, Karloffornia.

Tremble each head-bursting, packed issue to the latest gruenews, exclusive interviews with celebrities both living and dead and the most gore-geous terrorpics you'll ever see of past and future fang and flinch features. Plus coverage of books, video, makeup fx and, of course, the haunting horrors that nobody knows as well or loves as much as editor Ackermonster.

Discover why Steven Spielberg revealed to Forry, "A generation of Fantasy Lovers thank you for raising us so well." Learn why Ray Bradbury declares him, "The most important fan/collector/human being in the history of science fantasy fiction," and why Stephen King simply insists, "Forry was the best and he is the best!"

Every other month, at one third off the normal newsstand price. FORREST J. ACKERMAN'S MONSTERLAND.



NMP
NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

MONSTERLAND
3530 MOUND VIEW AVE.
STUDIO CITY, CA 91604

Make me a special charter subscriber to **Monsterland.** I get 9 issues for only $17.95.

NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____
STATE_____
ZIP_____

Please pay by check or money order—do not send cash! (Please allow checks to clear our bank)

ALLOW 8 TO 10 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY